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2nd INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE 2022

ARTS
RESEARCH
AFRICA



HOW DOES ARTISTIC RESEARCH TRANSFORM PEDAGOGY AND ART PRACTICE IN AFRICA?

THE WITS SCHOOL OF ARTS

WITS UNIVERSITY

ARTS
RESEARCH
AFRICA

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INTRODUCTION

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In the two years which have elapsed between the first and second Arts Research Africa conferences, the recognition of creative practice as a research modality in South Africa has increased in leaps and bounds. The question of what to call this research modality, be it practise-based, or practice-led, or artistic research remains unresolved, but these two conferences have gathered together a stimulating array of approaches to this new mode of research, while raising the banner for 'artistic research'.

This second conference, with its focus on how artistic research has transformed pedagogy as well as art practice in Africa, recognises that many academic practitioners, who have themselves completed advanced degrees with a creative practice component, are now looking to pass these learnings to their students through a transformed pedagogy. The 2022 conference thus provides an opportunity to assess the pattern of this development, still largely limited in Africa to the South African arts and education environment.

The first ARA Conference was held as a live event on Wits campus in February 2020.[1] Unknown to the organisers or any of the participants, the world was on the brink of the Covid-19 epidemic, and the draconian responses to the crisis by national governments, which locked down most of the world for the rest of 2020 and 2021. As a live event, however, the 2020 conference gave the ARA organisers the opportunity to experiment with different formats of presentation, breaking with the conventional mode of paper presentations and instead offering space for workshops and what we called 'lecture-performances' or 'lecture-demonstrations'. The second conference, planned during the uncertainty that followed the waning of the pandemic in 2021/22, was initially envisaged as an entirely online event; but as the effects of the pandemic began to subside, we chose to offer the first two days as a purely online event to facilitate international engagement, and a third, final day, again on Wits campus, as a live face-to-face event. Sadly, as a result of this structure, the bulk of the 2022 conference presentations were conventional textual outputs, albeit often reporting on creative research that was embodied or performative in nature.[2]

The emergence of artistic, or practice-based research in South African universities has been propelled by two institutional vectors. The first vector has been the increasing pressure on all academics in South African universities, including those teaching the creative arts, to get advanced research degrees, usually the PhD. This development has been facilitated by the recognition of creative work as an acceptable part of the PhD submission at many South African universities. The nature of this creative work as research has usually been left quite open in the regulations for the PhD, and the relationship between such work and the written component of the submission has not often been defined with any exactitude. Rebekka Sandmeier, a professor of Music at the University of Cape Town, in her close reading of the university regulations governing doctoral study in music at South African universities, notes that they don't "entirely support the requirement that research is embodied in the creative output of the degrees"(2020). Nevertheless this opening has created the opportunity for many academic teachers of the creative arts to get their PhD through what has increasingly been categorised as artistic or practice-led research.

The other vector was the adoption in 2017 by the South African Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) of a policy that awarded research subsidy to what were deemed "creative outputs".[3] (Prior to this, South African government research subsidy was only granted to conventional textual research outputs limited to journal articles, scholarly books, or academic conference papers.) Although the policy was gazetted in November 2017, the first round of submissions were only accepted in late 2019, a few months prior to the first ARA Conference. The policy requires the research offices of South African universities to administer the initial stage of creative work submissions to the DHET, which created a pressure on the universities concerned to engage with creative work as a form of research.

While the DHET policy on the recognition of "creative outputs" has been a welcome step forward there are major conceptual inconsistencies that permeate both the wording of the policy and the associated guidelines for the evaluation of such work. As Mareli Stolp has noted in her careful analysis of the documents: "there is alarmingly little clarify concerning divergence or similarity in terms of creative outputs and research" (100). The ARA project and the two ARA conferences have committed to using the term 'artistic research'. The nomenclature has become widely accepted in the institutionalised tertiary art systems, following along the European and Anglophone traditions, but has yet to be completely accepted in the South African context, where, as evidenced by the papers in these proceedings, a variety of other terms have been used by the authors to describe an approach which seeks to integrate creative practice and theoretical reflection towards the production of new knowledge.

Leaving aside the question of an agreed terminology, the 2022 conference papers that are published in these proceeding can be grouped into six thematics, revealing that artistic research in Africa is producing new knowledge and stimulating a rethinking of both research and pedagogy and holds significant value and relevance:

- **Cultural Expression:** Africa is a continent with rich and diverse artistic traditions and cultural heritages of which many have been marginalised through the impact of colonialism. In this context, artistic research provides a platform for African artists and scholars to explore and express their unique perspectives, narratives, and artistic practices. It helps to amplify the voices and stories of African artists, challenging dominant narratives and stereotypes. Striking examples of this thematic in the conference papers were Tosin Kooshima Tume's analysis of the concept of "danceturgy" and its role in the National Festival of Arts and Culture (NAFEST) in Nigeria; while Raezeen Wentworth's paper, "I Am Coloured": The Memoir as a Decolonial Methodology", explores the shift from a "definitive" to a "descriptive" approach in the context of the coloured identity narrative in South Africa. Also in this thematic, Kim Gurney describes her encounter with the Nafasi Academy for Contemporary Art, Expression, and Inclusion in Tanzania. Gurney argues that the Academy, launched in 2020, is an example of a new generation of African cultural institution which functions like a work of art through its innovations in terms of curriculum and pedagogy.

- **Decolonizing Knowledge and pedagogy:** Artistic research plays a crucial role in decolonizing knowledge production and challenging Eurocentric perspectives. By embracing diverse artistic methodologies, African artists and researchers are actively reclaiming and reshaping narratives, knowledge systems, and cultural practices that have been marginalized or suppressed during the colonial period in a process that the South American scholar Boaventura de Sousa Santos' describes as "epistemicide" (2015). Presenting a leading example of this thematic, David Andrew, from the Fine Arts department at the University of the Witwatersrand, outlines the development and evolution of the "un/chrono/logical timeline" of histories of arts education initiated by the Another Roadmap Africa Cluster (ARAC) Histories of Arts Education Research Project. Drawing inspiration from the legendary Medu Art Ensemble, the anti-apartheid cultural collective that operated from Gaborone in Botswana during the 1970s and '80s, the ARAC research framework employs intergenerational collaboration, dialogue, decentralisation, and a focus on language and ideology in order to advance a decolonial artistic pedagogy in Africa. Fritha Langerman, an artist-curator and printmaker at the Michaelis School of Fine Arts, University of Cape Town, shares her experiences with three exhibitions she designed to challenge traditional display

methods. By disrupting linear progression, introducing complex interconnections, and emphasizing sensory experiences, the exhibitions aimed to create alternative models of display that reflect the entangled and web-like nature of speciation. Her goal is to move beyond colonial narratives and imagine new ways of representing and understanding the natural world within museum spaces. In the field of contemporary dance pedagogy, Kristina Johnstone, from the University of Pretoria, presents an artistic research project that challenges representationalism in South African contemporary dance. The author argues against the use of discursive methodologies that reinforce colonial scripts and instead proposes an alternative approach based on embodied practices. Bailey Snyman, another South African choreographer and contemporary dance academic from the University of Pretoria, documents the intuitive and implicit choreographic processes behind his creation of "L.I.F.E.: A History of Distance," a dance-based physical theatre performance. His paper highlights the importance of understanding choreography as an embodied arts practice and emphasises the interplay between explicit and tacit knowledge in the choreographer's creative process. In the field of architectural pedagogy, Sandra Felix, from the School of Architecture and Planning at Wits University, reported on the application of practice-based design research (PbDR) methods in transforming the design practice of architecture students. Her paper explores how reflection and diffraction, two PbDR methods, can be used to shape students' design practice and challenge institutional biases in architectural pedogogy.

- **Social and Political Engagement:** Artistic research in Africa often addresses pressing social, political, and environmental issues. Artists use their creative practices to critically examine and raise awareness about topics such as identity, gender, migration, social justice, environmental sustainability, and post-colonial realities. This form of engagement has the potential to inspire dialogue, foster social change, and contribute to the development of African societies. Wits University architect and academic Brigitta Stone-Johnson in her paper explores the relationship between human actions, particularly in the context of extractive industries and colonial attitudes, and their impact on climate change. She emphasizes the need to reframe the relationship between humans and the living world through embodied creative practices that engage with materials and the body to challenge extractive narratives and foster a more holistic understanding of matter and its agency. The drama therapists and activists, Welma de Beer and Lucy Draper-Clarke, from Drama for Life at Wits University, presented their "Mas'phefumle" project, which explores healing arts practices and pedagogy as a response to trauma in South Africa. The authors propose that artistic research has the capacity to transform and advance arts-based pedagogies in the South Africa, by offering impactful healing practices that can help communities during challenging times and regulate individuals after traumatic incidents. The curriculum they have developed, called Healing Arts Pedagogy and Practices (HAPPy), aims to establish culturally sensitive activities that promote resilience and create safe learning environments. Another example of social and political engagement was reported by the artist, Joe Turpin, a South African currently studying at the Pratt Institute in New York, who has been uncovering the history of the Nazi Holocaust in Senegal though a combination of artistic and historical research. Turpin describes his residency in Dakar, Senegal, where he created artworks in response to the history of anti-Semitic laws and the Sébikhotane concentration camp, established by the Vichy French Colonial Regime in West Africa. His artworks aim to inform audiences about

this little-known history and attempt to develop a symbolism that speaks to a Sengalese audience. Michelle Stewart, in her paper, revisits the tradition of the Death Mask using the new material of digital clay. She reports on a creative project that involves 3D digital sculptures inspired by forensic facial photographs of unclaimed deceased persons in government morgues as well as posthumous photographs of own mother-in-law. While her work is situated within the discourse of art theory and history, rather than forensic art, it also has a strong social engagement through a partnership with the International Committee of the Red Cross's Missing and Deceased Migrant Project and explores the humanitarian implications of migrant deaths in South Africa.

- **Interdisciplinary Collaboration:** Artistic research encourages collaboration between artists, researchers, scholars, and practitioners from various disciplines, including visual arts, performing arts, literature, music, film, and more. This interdisciplinary approach fosters innovative and holistic perspectives, allowing for new insights and possibilities for knowledge creation and dissemination. A striking example of this interdisciplinary approach was Anita Szentesi's report, entitled "It Depends on the Lens", describing her use of film for experiential teaching in architectural design at the Wits School of Architecture and Planning. She outlines a creative research project with students that combines architecture and film to promote inclusive and collaborative design environments in architectural pedagogy. The technique, called 'character-led design', explores the complex relationships among people, culture, identity, and architecture through the lens of filmic narratives. By emphasizing the lived experiences of imagined characters in the design process, the research aims to create socially responsible and culturally sensitive designs to influence the architectural profession and contribute to decolonial education. Another radically interdisciplinary endeavour was presented by University of Johannesburg artist and academic, Leora Farber, in her paper, "The Scientific Lab as Studio/the Studio as Scientific Lab". She describes her praxis involving hands-on experimentation with living and non-living materials in scientific labs, resulting in artistic outcomes. Her paper highlights the increasing collaborations between artists and scientists, leading to the establishment of bioart labs and art-science programs. Another interdisciplinary intervention in the field of architectural pedogogy is described by Dirk Bahmann. He proposes that by fabricating sculptural artifacts, architecture students in the Wits School of Architecture and Planning learn how to articulate and make apparent the atmospheric qualities of constructed spaces. He argues that to be able to imagine or recognise atmosphere is a crucial skill for architects since atmosphere determines how people respond to space. The methodology is designed, through iterative cycles of making and critical reflection, to make students increasingly aware of atmosphere and to develop their ability to create and articulate certain feeling tones within spaces. This artistic praxis relies upon a nonlinear, bodily knowing that seeks to challenge the dominance of ocularcentric practice in the discipline of architecture. Also in the field of architectural orientations and collaborations, Stefan Winter, from the Film University Babelsberg in Germany and a Visiting Professor at the School of Architecture and Planning, Wits University, presents a paper which explores the evolving relationship between artistic research, architecture, and urban design in the context of shifting paradigms in the understanding of architecture and urban development. A notable aspect of his approach is that is is informed by the historical precedents of artistic avant-garde movements, such as *dérive*

and *psychogeography*, which Winter examines and discusses in the contemporary context of architectural practice. The potential of artistic research to contribute to sustainability in ecological, economic, and societal dimensions is explored through various examples. Overall, the paper argues for the transformative power of artistic research in shaping future city spaces.

- **Knowledge Preservation and Innovation:** African artistic research contributes to the preservation and revitalization of traditional artistic practices, cultural heritage, and indigenous knowledge systems. It also encourages experimentation, innovation, and the fusion of traditional and contemporary artistic techniques and forms. This dynamic approach creates opportunities for the evolution and reimagining of African artistic expressions. An outstanding example of both knowledge preservation and innovation was presented by Jayne Batzofin, the digital archivist at the Centre for Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies, University of the Cape Town. In a paper entitled "Archiving as Artistic Practice", Batzofin describes the development of an online showcase repository for the ReTAGS (Reimagining Tragedy from Africa and the Global South) practice-as-research artistic productions, and the methodology behind documenting and digitally archiving their processes. The paper reflects on the author's involvement as the digital archivist for the ReTAGS research and the choices made and implemented on the online showcase repository. What emerge from Batzfin's paper are the possibilities of understanding the archive as a means of artistic engagement in its own right. Wits Music Lecturer, Kgmotso Moshugi, reports on a research project that culminated in a concert honoring South African musician and activist Bra Abbey Cindi. The project involved reissuing Cindi's album, forming a band of young musicians to perform his music, and creating a vocal group called No Limits to reinterpret Cindi's earlier South African choral works. His paper proposes the use of music to explore the past, present, and future, linking generations and addressing social issues by reimagining and thus preserving historical musical works. In his paper, on "Fragmented Scribbles", Smangaliso Ngwenya, a PhD candidate from Wits, explores artistic creation and embodied practice-led research in the context of creating an ensemble screendance titled "Fragmented Scribbles." His research prioritizes the whole being as a site of artistic exploration, using the technique of 'Passing Through' as a pedagogical method. From the University of Zululand, Lindelwa Pepu, writing from an African feminist perspective, re-imagines the role of female players in the making and restoring of the traditional *Uhadi* musical bow. Pepu argues that the proper understanding of the *Uhadi* bow as a musical instrument, often mislabelled and lacking contextual information in ethnographic museum collections, can only be restored through engagement with living female *uhadi* players, restoring their contribution to reviving and preserving the instrument's cultural significance. On a more theoretically informed engagement, Dominique Lämmli, from the Zurich University of the Arts in Switzerland, introduces the concept of 'Art in Action Research' (AiAR) as an alternative paradigm for art practitioners working in sociocultural settings. AiAR aims to accommodate diverse notions of art, theories, and knowledge bases, integrating tacit knowledge into research frameworks. The paradigm is grounded in the issues emerging from the work environment, focusing on real-life challenges to co-create a liveable future. Finally, Hedwig Barry, an independent artist and art teacher based in Johannesburg, in dialogue with David Andrew, reflects on the intertwining of artistic research and pedagogies within the context of a collaborative project conducted at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. Their

paper explores the concepts of proximities, grids and flows, confrontations, and time as entry points into the space of artistic research. They emphasize the importance of untethering and foraging, challenging established boundaries and embracing discomfort as a catalyst for creative growth.

- **Global Dialogue and Representation:** Artistic research in Africa facilitates cross-cultural exchanges and global dialogue. It provides a platform for African artists and researchers to participate in international artistic and academic communities, showcasing their work, sharing their perspectives, and contributing to a more inclusive and diverse global artistic discourse. A strong example of this global engagement was Mwenya B. Kabwe's paper on the Priority Mail Process Lab: a month-long virtual residency program called into existence during the Covid-19 pandemic. The lab aimed to facilitate an exchange of objects, ideas, and insights between Francophone and Anglophone African women artists. The paper explores the artistic research practice behind the lab, focusing on the themes of migration, mobility, and the role of African women. Using artistic research to facilitate engagement between practitioners in South Africa and Brazil, Brett Pyper from Wits together with Renan Ribeiro Moutinho and other colleagues from institutions in Brazil reported on their exploration of "sound praxis", a decolonial approach in South African universities inspired by the work of Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire. Their paper highlights the collaboration between Brazilian and South African activists, educators, and researchers, as they seek to apply sound praxis in their respective contexts and explore the potential for transformative pedagogy and artistic practice.

Overall, these papers from the second ARA Conference in 2022 demonstrate that artistic research in Africa serves as a vital tool for cultural empowerment, knowledge production, social engagement, and the representation of African voices and perspectives within the global artistic and intellectual landscape. In these papers, artistic research has demonstrated the potential to challenge existing paradigms, foster innovation, and to contribute to the ongoing transformation of African societies and artistic practices.

At the same time, the 2022 Conference has gone some way towards clarifying the various terminologies currently employed in this diverse field of research. A notable addition in the 2022 Conference line up were academic teachers of architectural design. These teachers are using different forms of artistic practice as enabling techniques for expanding architectural pedagogy. This is clearly an example of "practice-based" research because the goal is not to produce artistic works but to advance the understanding of their students towards a more socially conscious or de-colonised architectural practice.[4] By contrast, the understanding of "artistic research" has been advanced by presenters such as Tanja Sakota, from the department of Film and TV at Wits University. At the ARA2022 conference Sakota presented the results of her exploration of memory and autoethnography that took place through the making of her film "Shattered Reflection". In her conference paper she reflected on the complex pressures of her identity as the South African offspring of refugees from Eastern Europe and the influence that this has had on her approach to the research processes which involved accessing memory without archives, and using film to uncover depict memories that were often fragmented or even invisible in her parents' lost homes in Europe. In her 2023 book, *Uncovering Memory: Filming in South Africa, Germany, Poland and Bosnia/Hertzogovina*, she reflected on her research process and concluded that "the moment we recognise the presence of the filmmaker . . we create a distinction between practice-based research and artistic research"(295). This suggests an understanding of artistic research in which the emphasis is not simply on the status

of the artworks (objects or performances) that are at the heart of the process, but also the subjectivity and positioning of the maker/researcher. This understanding of artistic research may be most productive in terms of understanding the potential of this research modality in an African cultural context.

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Notes

1 The full proceedings of the first ARA Conference are available, as an Open Access publication, at https://hdl.handle.net/10539/29248

2 As the organisers of the 2022 Conference we had actually hoped that the online format would facilitate alternative forms of presentation; but this turned out not to be the case.

3 Policy on the Evaluation of Creative Outputs and Innovations produced by South African Public Higher Education Institutions

4 A related development has been the adoption of artistic practices by urban planners and policy analysts. See the ARA podcast with Avril Joffe, the previous head of the department of Cultural Policy and Management in the Wits School of Arts.

IT DEPENDS ON THE LENS: FILM AS EXPERIENTIAL TEACHING IN ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN AND DESIGN REPRESENTATION

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This paper presents a creative research project that combines architecture and film to promote inclusive and collaborative design environments in architectural pedagogy. The technique, called character-led design, explores the complex relationships among people, culture, identity, and architecture through the lens of filmic narratives. By emphasizing the lived experiences of characters in the design process, the research aims to create socially responsible and culturally sensitive designs. The paper discusses the pedagogic process, student projects, and feedback, highlighting the potential of character-led design to influence the architectural profession and contribute to decolonial education. The technique aligns with critical spatial practice theory and offers an inclusive and collaborative methodology for architectural design.

This paper introduces my creative research in architecture and design and explores the transformative work that I have been contributing to architectural pedagogy. My research is interdisciplinary, exploring a technique that combines architecture and film in the architectural design process, to achieve inclusive, collaborative place-making. The research is situated in the broad field of narrative in the design process, seeking to contribute new knowledge to architectural pedagogy and design theory. The technique can be extended beyond spatial design and applied more widely in other areas of learning and culture-based practices. In this paper, I will introduce my research and its background, and the technique for which I have coined the phrase *character-led design*. I will then discuss the situatedness of my research in relation to relevant projects, workshops, and strategies that employ similar approaches to architectural pedagogy, noting how my approach aligns with decolonial education's aims. The pedagogic process will be discussed through various student projects from the first-year design studio, where the character-led design technique was introduced, as well as anonymous feedback from students who participated in online questionnaires about the pedagogic process. To conclude the paper, the achievements of the character-led design technique will be discussed.

My creative research explores the diverse and complex relationships that exist among people, culture, identity, history, buildings, and landscapes through character-led design, to promote collaborative and inclusive design environments in the architectural design studio and in the design of buildings that students are attempting. As an architect, I was involved in several projects in commercial practice, and whilst working, I noticed the lack of consideration in the design process of the diverse and complex relationships that exist among people, culture and the places they inhabit. These social complexities seem to get stripped out in the design process and people and life are viewed as abstractions and or simplified objects within the architecture. I realised that the feelings, emotions, memories, subjectivities, and time attaching to buildings and places are most often not felt or considered during the design process nor seen in architectural representations. Representations of people are often part of architectural drawings, however, they are usually used to show the scale and programmatic functionality of a space. Architects have been known to customise their figure abstractions (Fig.1), but these usually form part of the architect's identity and drawing style.

The standard South African architectural curriculum, which is based on the British RIBA tradition and is a combination of universal and modernist Western thinking, has not been changed since it was first introduced and remains focused on preparing students to become employable professional architects. Yet if architectural students could learn to design more meaningful, socially-conscious places, acknowledging the diverse and complex aspects of life in the design process, and can show these aspects in architectural representations, could they then influence the architectural profession to promote more socially responsible and culturally sensitive designs? How could educators enable discussions in design studios to deal with and understand the complex and multiple viewpoints of students who come from diverse backgrounds?

I began to wonder about how architects could re-engage with the world in a collaborative, participatory manner to promote more socially conscious designs, rather than viewing people as abstract users of a space. According to Arturo Escobar, design is about the relationship between diverse forms of life and contrasting ideas about sociability and the world (2018). As an architect and educator, I responded by introducing character-led design into undergraduate projects to explore these complex relationships in the architectural design process, in order to promote a more socially responsible and culturally sensitive design practice.

Also, at this time, there was an openness to change amongst colleagues in the School of Architecture because of the #FeesMustFall student-led protest move-

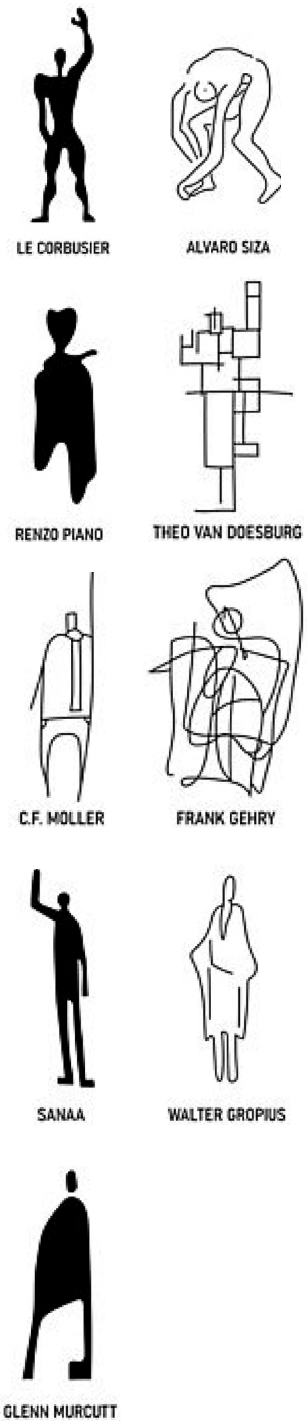


Fig. 1 Meghan2238, Famous Architect's Entourage, 2022, Various Sizes, https://www.redbubble.com/i/photographic-print/Famous-Architect-s-Entourage-by-meghan2238/70134700.6Q0TX

ment.[1] I was highly affected by the protests and was made aware that most students felt isolated and excluded because of the curriculum that we were teaching at the Wits School of Architecture and Planning. Without realising it, we were most likely excluding students because what we were teaching them was not relevant to their context. We were most likely teaching from the universal and modernist point of view that we believed was the only way to be, thus excluding other ways of being and other modes of situatedness in the world. I identified and responded to these problems by introducing the technique of character-led design to explore how character-led narratives from students in a class could enable a more inclusive and collaborative approach to a design environment.

Character-led design proposes a technique that combines architecture and film to assist with creating inclusive environments for learners and assisting them to consider the complexities of life in the design process. It focuses on the design of places from a character's lived experience in the form of a narrative. The form of narrative in this technique is the filmic narrative of screenwriting. Starting a design with a script requires characters to embody the places in which their emotional journeys unfold. A character-driven story is one in which the audience invests and believes. Syd Field claims that "[c]haracter is the essential foundation of your screenplay. It is the heart and soul and nervous system of your story. Before you put a word on paper, you must know your character" (Field 1982, 22).

There are existing filmic approaches to architectural design pedagogy. These include the workshops run by Dr Graham Cairns (2012), whose students explored film and directorial techniques in the UK and Spain to grasp how film directors view and employ space. Students used these explorations in their own design projects to uncover previously hidden potential in spatial layouts and arrangements. The workshops explored the relationship between film and spatial design to promote interdisciplinary design thinking in an educational context. They utilised a learning-by-doing approach that enabled the architecture students to address their own topics through techniques they were not used to, obliging them to reconsider their standard ways of working and thinking. Similarly, character-led design explores interdisciplinary design thinking in an educational context. But in character-led design, the emphasis is on developing an appropriate contextual filmic script, with character as the first step in the design process. These are techniques not usually employed in the architectural design process, and their inclusion aims to challenge students' standard ways of thinking about architectural design to develop future designers who are more socially responsible and culturally sensitive in their design practice.

Professor Nic Clear (2014) has led the use of the moving image in architecture and architectural education for over twenty years, developing skills and techniques through a variety of projects including documentary programmes and highly speculative 'virtual' conceptions of space. His speculative projects propose architecture 'as' science fiction to imagine what architecture in the near future might be like, drawing on the imagery of science fiction, including film. Similarly, character-led design focuses on the potential of film as a powerful medium through which to imagine and represent a parallel universe. Filmic narrative could be a method of designing a building using fiction rather than methods derived from ideas embedded in drafting plans, orthogonal grids, etc. The idea of designing characters, including indigenous characters, could make the process relatable for all designers. Through film, the same place could be read from the point of view of multiple characters, so that a single place can contain multiple narratives. Designing a building from a character's point of view should remind us that design is in a fundamental sense *for* the people who are going to be using and inhabiting the resultant building. Film can reach a wide audience and be understood without the use of spoken language. Film can convey meaning outside of the immediate optical system. It communicates more than just the spatial coordinates assigned to a place by sending signals to our

subconscious perception. Cities and urban sites in films are spaces within spaces that reflect our prevailing cultural norms, ethical mores, societal structures and ideologies (Koeck, 2013).

Character-led design aligns with Jane Rendell's' *Site Writing* (2019) and critical spatial practice theory. They share the objective of exploring and reconfiguring the relations between subjects and sites, and respond to the need to form more ethical, inclusive, and collaborative spatial theories and practices in the design process. One of the *Site Writing* projects on Jane Rendell's website is "Site Stories: Explorations of Urban Spaces through Drawing and Animation" by Tenna Doktor Olsen Tvedebrink and Tina Vestermann Olsen (2022). This pedagogical workshop took place at Aalborg University, Denmark, in 2022 and focused on undergrad students' attention to stories that are revealed in surfaces and details in selected urban and historical sites. The workshop challenged the traditional and factual understanding of the materiality of urban space through artistic, fictional, and embodied experiences. Students were taught to experiment with their understanding of materiality, reminding themselves that humans are sentient bodies and narrative beings so as better to understand how to design future urban spaces. The workshop also created a space where students made their own surprising discoveries and explorations about site thinking. They explored different drawing techniques and discovered the valuable potential of animation as a tool in the creative design process. The animations were workshopped in collaboration with ANIDOX (Anidox 2021), who aim to expand narrative horizons and embrace outsider voices using the power of new media platforms, such as animated films. Similarly, character-led design makes use of animation, film and filmic narrative techniques in the creative design process. Through the creation of a filmic script and character design, the designer experiences things through other people's eyes, walks in other people's shoes, and therefore becomes more sensitised to the question of how a future built intervention could affect the people concerned.

How does character-led design align with decolonial education's aims? During the #FeesMustFall protests, students presented decolonisation "in the form of an emphatic Afrocentrism delivered in charged language" (Jansen 2019, 54) as shown in the quotation below.

> The current curriculum dehumanises black students. We study all these dead white men who presided over our oppression, and we are made to use their thinking as a standard and as a point of departure. Our own thinking as Africans has been undermined. We must have our own education from our own continent. We cannot be decolonised by white people who colonised us. Decolonisation advances the interests of Africans, instead of advancing Eurocentric interests. (qtd. in Evans 2016)

Jansen (2019) states that the academic response to 'decolonise the curriculum' involved little critical engagement and that decolonisation became a test of political commitment to transform universities. The meaning of decolonisation should be critically reviewed to formulate a relevant response to it. But how do we critically review the decolonisation of our curriculum now that decolonisation has emerged as a political slogan on university campuses? Jansen (2019) believes that crude notions of replacing Western content with African content, or filling in forms that state how the curriculum was decolonised this month, are not likely to be the appropriate critical response. The university curriculum will always embrace legacies from the past, the needs of the present, and visions for the future. Jansen (2019) maintains that there can be no clean break from the past, and that the relationship between knowledge and power is complex and cannot be resolved by a moment focused only on decolonisation. Critics are, however, rethinking the framing of the postcolonial condition as a centre-periphery problematic, rather than a decolonisation impera-

tive. Do the character-led design explorations in the first-year design studio projects address this rethinking and reframing of South African knowledge production in terms of centre-periphery rather than decolonisation?

Thomas Avermaete's essay titled *Death of the Author, Center and Meta-Theory* (Avermaete, 2017) addresses the centre-periphery notion. Planning historiography faces a major challenge because of the bias of the various Euro-American historiographies of urban planning. There is an enduring divide between "First World" cities, which are viewed as models that generate theory and policy, and "Third World" cities which are seen as problematic places requiring diagnosis and reform (Avermaete, 2017). Scholars have privileged and idealised London, New York and Tokyo as the three leading cities from the Global North, in investigating and historicising the relationship between cities and processes of globalisation. There is a need for a more geographically balanced history of urban planning. Several theoretical and methodological issues surface when the notion of widening the geography of urban planning histories is addressed. How does one create a methodology that considers the relationship of urban planning strategies between the metropolis and its colonial territories? "[H]istoire croisée" (Avermaete 2017, 482) is a method of history writing that focuses on the interactions among cultures, traditions and disciplines. The method aims to include more negotiated perspectives, rather than focusing on cultural influence and the simple reception of culture.

In engaging with the multidimensionality of the history of urban experience, challenging and less familiar sources and methods should be explored, including film. Avermaete claims that "film can capture the personalities, motivations, reactions, and conflicts that are all so important in understanding the relation between different actors in urban planning. Digital media will in the near future undoubtedly also open new possibilities for the investigation of multiple, unequal, and transdisciplinary forms of authorship in the realm of planning" (2017, 480). Character-led design's inclusive collaborative approach could not only respond to the decolonisation and centre-periphery focus in the South African university context, but also respond more broadly to the need for an inclusive collaborative methodology to counter the top-down design approach that has dominated planning strategies and the architectural profession.

In responding to the demand for a decolonised curriculum made by the protestors, I grappled with the notion that I, as a non-indigenous person in South Africa, needed to engage with indigenous methodology and decolonising methodology. I discussed this with a colleague, who is indigenous to South Africa, and we agreed that my engagement with these questions demonstrated a willingness and an openness to recognise the necessity for change, which is just as necessary as having indigenous role models in architectural design pedagogy. I recognised that there was a vulnerability that the educator needs to address in the sharing of personal lived experience between student and educator, which should be an equal exchange of knowledge (Sendra, 2020). My learning experience while teaching character-led design allowed me to become more vulnerable, to become open to listening to and learning from the stories and experiences of students, rather than telling them how things ought to be. "Instead, vulnerability can foster a self-reflexive, safe, and inclusive learning environment, where class members' interactions are based on mutual respect" (Sendra 2020, 69).

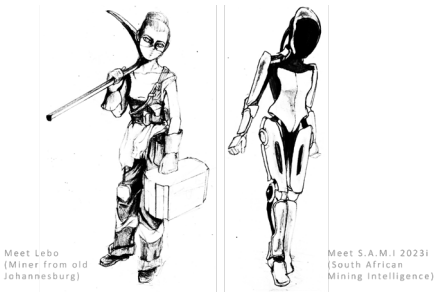


Fig. 2 Mmabatho Grace Mokalapa, AlterNative Johannesburg Project Character Design, 2022

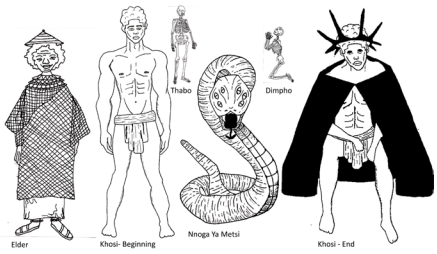


Fig. 3 Group 04 Students, Kgoro Ya Kuruman Project Character Design, 2022



Fig. 4 Mmabatho Grace Mokalapa and Liam Hildebrand, Inside Out House Project, Land Character Design, 2022.

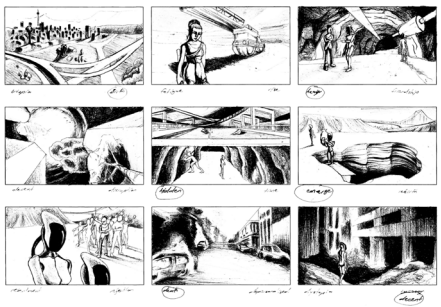


Fig. 5 Mmabatho Grace Mokalapa, AlterNative Johannesburg Project Storyboard

In the first-year design studio, the aim is to start the design process from the personal story of a student and not exclusively from traditional top-down teaching. The students design characters who experience and embody the world of the stories, which are also created by the students. The brief, in a sense, becomes student-led and enables a collaborative discussion with the educators. The characters, the narrative, and the world that the students create become the foundation of the design, from conceptual phase through to final phase.

Could screenwriting be a narrative form that might be linked to the decolonising methodologies of storytelling? Linda Tuhiwai Smith refers to storytelling as a potential indigenous research project: "Storytelling, oral histories, the perspectives of elders and of women have become an integral part of all indigenous research. Each individual story is powerful. But the point about the stories is not that they simply tell a story, or tell a story simply. These new stories contribute to a collective story in which every indigenous person has a place" (Tuhiwai Smith 2012, 146).

In the character-led design technique, the worlds that the students create could be real but aligned with new or alternative paradigms, or they could be imaginary. The notion of alternative paradigms is consonant with Walter Mignolo's concept of the pluriverse (Mignolo 2018). According to pluriversality, the world is not a unified totality but an interconnected diversity that we can choose to inhabit. This way of thinking sets us free to think decolonially about the pluriversality of the world rather than its universality (Mignolo 2018). In line with the aims of decolonial education, then, the character-led design technique was introduced into various projects in the first-year design studio.

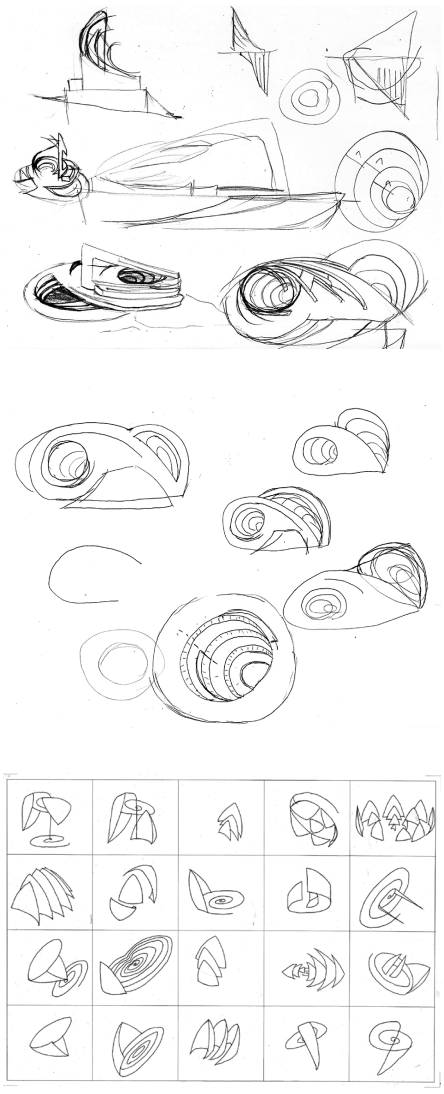


Fig. 6 Mmabatho Grace Mokalapa, AlterNative Johannesburg Project, Concept Sketches, 2022.

The pedagogic process of the character-led design technique begins with writing a script about a context, real or imagined, through the eyes of characters that students have created. This enables students to think deeply about their context, as well as reflect on their beliefs and way of thinking within this context. The film script is an entertainment narrative that introduces conflict and climax into a character's journey (Grimaldi et al. 2013). The main function of this type of narrative, for the designer, is to include someone else's history, identity, and connection to a place in the design process. Such character-led narratives support the design process by including multiple voices, the voices of potential users as well as the voice of the designer. In sum, character-led design aims to achieve a design that is inclusive and collaborative by exploring empathy, identification, and memory through imagined character stories, in the form of a script that draws on the personal stories of students from diverse backgrounds.

The three-act linear script structure in screenwriting, which is usually 120 pages long, is severely condensed in character-led design, so that students write a one-page script comprising three paragraphs devoted to the beginning, middle and end of their story. The paragraphs may include several scenes to tell the story. The scene headings indicating whether the character is outside or inside, at a specific location, during a specific time of day, are vital components that students are required to include in their scripts. These scene headings enable students to imagine, through writing, the interior or exterior of places, the context and site that their character will inhabit, and the temporal and spatial dimensions that their character will experience. Writing a script as the first step in the design process is different to receiving a standard curriculum design brief, which might include a narrative about a context that has been written

by the person who has prepared the brief. The characters in that context would most likely be abstract users whose opinions have not been considered.

In the character-led design technique, the educators and students work together to develop the students' narratives into design briefs. Educators are the facilitators of the project, and students are participants, though these roles frequently blur and the atmosphere becomes collaborative. The challenges of introducing this kind of filmic narrative into the architectural design studio are faced, first, by the teaching team, who are unfamiliar with screenwriting and filmmaking processes. Secondly, the students are required to undertake a large amount of writing, and their writing skills are usually not strong. Additional writing assistance may therefore be required to develop these skills.

The next step in the character-led design pedagogic process is inventing characters, including indigenous characters, to make the design process relatable to all the students in the architecture class (Fig. 2). In more current iterations of the character-led design technique, the character design has been extended to include other beings, not just people, an innovation stemming from the worldview of indigenous knowledge systems (Fig. 3). The students are required to consider beings which include animals, mythological entities, and even the land. The land is recognised as a physical entity, a historical and cultural entity, as well as a spiritual being. Students are therefore required to stretch their imaginations and drawing talents in order to create believable entities which represent aspects of the environment as sentient beings, thereby (for some) adopting a different worldview (Fig. 4).

Once the script has been created and the characters have been designed, the next step in the pedagogic process involves the visualisation of the script and characters in the form of a storyboard. The storyboard (Fig. 5) is a visual translation of the scenes. Students learn that the frames in a storyboard usually follow a structured linear temporal sequence from left to right, top to bottom. Each frame captures a major event in their story, maintaining a flow in the overall narrative while serving to summarise other events. The drawing for every frame needs to consider the setting, the characters, their postures and positions, the angle of the shot if one were holding a camera, the foreground, middle-ground, background, the time of day or atmosphere, and objects and elements that might be relevant and important to that part of the story. The storyboard sets up the *mise-en-scène* within the frame, revealing the main story and back story at the same time. Creating storyboards from a written script could be compared to the urban design visual approach known as serial vision (Cullen 1961), where a designer imagines the physicality of a building and the urban landscape through sequential sketches, which are drawn in a way that imagines a walk from one end of an architectural plan drawing to the other. In the character-led design technique, the sequential sketches are imagined and drawn from the script. Central to the sketches are the presence of the characters and their relationship to the physicality of an imagined building and urban landscape. The storyboard is a visual script that enables the students to imagine the worlds that they are creating through their stories and characters.

Once the storyboard has been developed, the exploration of conceptual sketches (Fig. 6) and conceptual models (Fig. 7) is iterated, and feedback is given by educators in the architectural design studio until a convincing translation of the narrative into architecture is achieved.

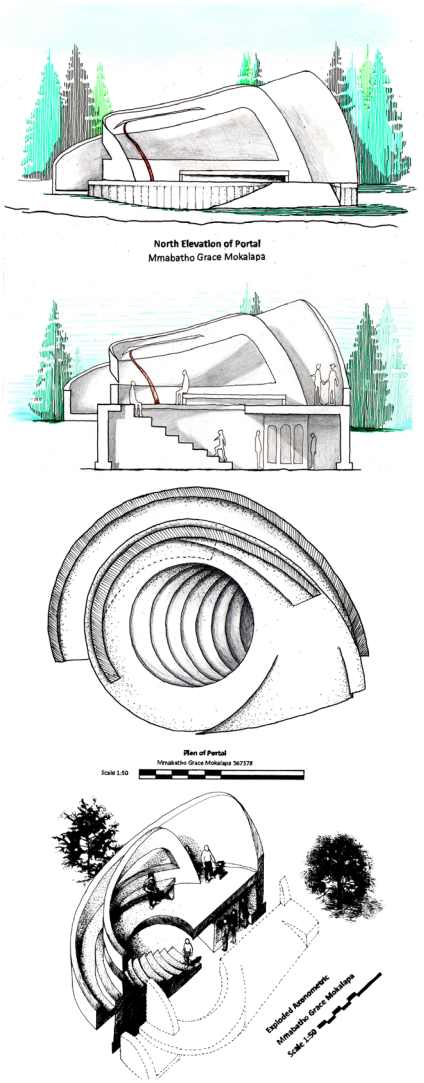


Fig. 8 Mmabatho Grace Mokalapa, AlterNative Johannesburg Project, Final Architectural Orthographic Drawings, 2022.

The character-led design technique also creates new opportunities to present the architectural project. The student's designs are expressed in different forms of presentation, including the characters and the imagined worlds from the narratives created by students (Fig. 8). Film and animation become new, emotive ways of showcasing an architectural project (Fig. 9). In the films and animations, the students create and experience the journey of the world they create through the to-scale characters inside their models. The architecture becomes both a product of the narrative and a background for the narrative; it also becomes one of the characters (Fig. 10). Film adds the additional layer of audience, the viewer, who is not involved in the design process, but experiences the presented narrative.



Fig. 9 Michel Kalongo, Kgoro Ya Kuruman, Animation Screenshot Interior



Fig. 10 Michel Kalongo, Kgoro Ya Kuruman, Animation Screenshot Exterior

Anonymous student questionnaires have been run in the first-year architectural design studio since character-led design was introduced. The surveys include questions regarding the student's thoughts and perceptions of the effects of the character-led design technique. The answers reveal that students become more aware of the environments that they are in when making films about these environments, that film frame captures and highlights aspects of life and place that we may usually be blind to, and that storytelling enables the sharing of diverse positionalities, which are usually not considered in teaching environments. Below are some answers from the anonymous student questionnaires:

"...creating a narrative that connects architecture and the user..."

"... look at architectural drawings in animation helped with understanding proportion as well as spatial use..."

"... trying to tackle difficult social, racial, and economic topics through our stories..."

"... learning how people actually connect with the architecture around them..."

"This course taught me to analyse buildings and architecture in terms of history and culture which was very useful because one must be sensitive to an area's history when designing buildings for it in the future."

The achievement of the character-led design technique is that it has changed the way that first-year architectural students learn about designing spaces. The students achieve spatial designs with qualities determined by ambience and meaning, not only by the length or height available, or the generic users of a building, or the statutory constraints of a site. The character-led design technique initiates a design in three dimensions and includes the movement of a character who is sentient, and who occupies and moves through spaces in time, which is different from designing on paper in two dimensions using only architectural orthographic projections and abstract figures to indicate scale. The design occurs through the unconscious stages of a story: a character who inhabits a world where the story begins, where a crisis may occur that catapults the character towards inevitable change, and a resolution where the character and the original world must change. These spaces, conceptualised from a story, are without preconceived ideas about what a specific type of building should look or feel like. The spaces are different because they are derived from people's intuitive understanding and spatial culture from their life experience. It is the spatial atmosphere experienced by the sentient character that is incorporated into the design process of the architecture.

Film suspends a person's disbelief, and often the viewer is emotionally invested in watching a film. This does not happen when a person looks at an architectural orthographic projection or presentation. When a student presents their design through a film, these affective layers become part of the architectural presentation, which makes people more sensitively aware and encourages the designer to be more empathic. Also, the client who funds an architectural design project is usually not the person who uses the building. By presenting an architectural project through an emotive film, the client should have a better understanding of what the users of the building require and need.

In conclusion, the character-led design technique could have applications in various fields including architecture, film and scenography, community-based architecture and film projects, and decoloniality in education.

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Notes

1 The #FeesMustFall student-led protest movement began on 14 October 2015 in South Africa at The University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. Students reacted to a national announcement about university fee increases and protested for free tertiary education and a decolonised curriculum. The protests were impactful, universities were shut down, coursework and final exams could not continue. It took some time for negotiations between students and the government to be concluded, before the universities reopened (Malaba 2021).

L.I.F.E.: ARTICULATING AN EMBEDDED CHOREOGRAPHIC PROCESS

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This paper explores the evolving landscape of choreographic research in South Africa, focusing on the interdisciplinary nature of contemporary choreography and its reliance on embodied knowledge. The paper examines the theory of tacit knowledge proposed by Michael Polanyi and its intersections with embodiment theories. It further investigates the four interpretations of tacit knowledge presented by Harald Grimen. The study documents the intuitive and implicit choreographic processes behind the creation of "L.I.F.E.: A History of Distance," a dance-based physical theatre performance. The presentation highlights the importance of understanding choreography as an embodied arts practice and emphasizes the interplay between explicit and tacit knowledge in the choreographer's creative process.

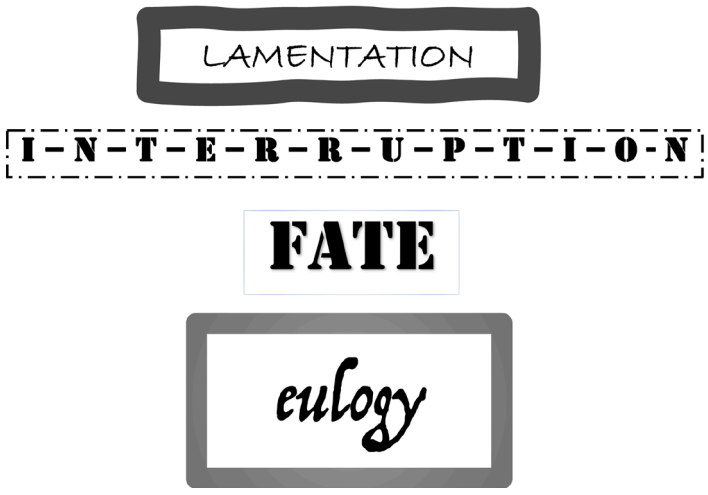
Prologue

> [The choreographer] stepped forward to explain to the audience what they had just witnessed, and the more she talked [...] the less you understood what she was saying. It wasn't because she was using technical terms that were unfamiliar to you, it was the more fundamental fact that her words were utterly useless, inadequate to the task of describing the wordless performance you had just seen, for no words could convey the fullness and brute physicality of what the dancer had done. (Auster 2013, 202)

Choreographic research in South Africa has evolved and grown significantly over the past few decades. Contemporary choreographers are constantly tasked with imagining new interpretations and approaches to their choreographic craft. Doing research into the processes embedded in choreographic practice becomes vital as it forges new conversations about and interrogations of *the art of choreography*.[1] Practitioner-researchers and artist-scholars are at the forefront of this research.

Friedman (2012, 7) suggests that 'dance makers [in South Africa] have been increasingly challenged to re-appraise how dance has been traditionally composed' and that both content and context should be considered when one approaches the choreographic process. This is the context in which this paper is situated. It can be argued that there are as many processes for making choreographies as there are choreographers and as many ways of creating embodied choreographies as there are interpretations of embodiment theories and approaches. This variability makes for a constantly evolving art form characterised by dynamic diversities and iterations, with contemporary choreographers drawing on many different evolving choreographic sources and methods.

This paper becomes exigent because *the art of choreography*, according to Green (2010, 4), is 'far more complex and defies boundaries,' whereas *to choreograph* is simply '[to arrange] movements to express an idea or concept.' My position is that, because of its 'complexity,' the art of choreography requires constant reconnaissance. It is an intuitive, embodied process that continually shapes and reveals unique approaches determined by the choreographer's interpretations of material from a myriad sources. The embodiedness of the process is at the centre of this paper. I endeavour to articulate the seemingly inarticulable nature of tacit knowledge, using the four interpretations of tacit knowledge proposed by Grimen (1991). The aim is to add to the growing field of artist-scholar choreographic research by documenting the intuitive, embedded or implicit choreographic processes that went into the making of *L.I.F.E.: A History of Distance* (Snyman 2017), the creative component of my PhD. *L.I.F.E.* is an acronym, with each letter representing a section of the choreographic work.



L.I.F.E. was constructed in four parts, each 20 minutes long. The four sections were woven together into a whole that was presented as a full-length dance-based physical theatre performance. This paper is structured according to the sections of the choreography. *Lamentation* reflects on the theoretical background of the research and offers a brief overview of Polanyi's (1958) theory of 'tacit knowledge.' *Interruption* introduces and interprets Polanyi's theory and its intersections with contemporary embodiment theories, while *Fate* discusses Harald Grimen's (1991) interpretations of Polanyi's theory and imagines each as a potential choreographic strategy in the making of *L.I.F.E.* Finally, *Eulogy* reflects on my embedded-implicit creative process and what it shares with the theory.

This paper considers choreography as an embodied arts practice that relies on 'inner sensing, imaginative response, and aesthetic shaping of the inner experience' (Blom and Chaplin 1982, xi). In my case, the practice includes interpretative choreographic strategies that emerge from my reading of Grimen.

Lamentation

There is a dearth of literature on choreographers' practice because choreography is widely seen as a 'form of inscription' or 'writing on the body' (Bannerman 2010, 474; Smith-Autard, 2010, 123). While there is a substantial literature on the importance of embodiment and the body as a fundamental source of inquiry in the humanities and social sciences (Featherstone and Turner 1995, 2), few scholars address the question of embodiment in the processes of creating choreographies.

When I was working with First Physical Theatre Company (FPTC) in 2006, I was part of Professor Juanita Finestone-Praeg's production of *16 Kinds of Emptiness* (*16*) for the National Arts Festival in Makhanda (then Grahamstown), South Africa. *16* was a Practice as Research (PaR) project, part of a series set up by university drama departments in consultation with the National Research Foundation. There was a call for case studies that presented an opportunity for South African practitioners to engage actively in 'shifting the status and perception of research in the performing arts within the academy and the profession' (Finestone-Praeg 2007, 203). In 2007 Finestone-Praeg published 'Reflective (A)Musings on 16 Kinds of Emptiness: Re-Framing Research for Practice.' The article is a personal reflection on her involvement as a practitioner within this research initiative.

The PaR project was one of the first of its kind in South Africa, marking a time when a more formalised approach to the making of South African physical theatre and dance was emerging. Gary Gordon (2010, 38), for instance, called for movement research as a way of bridging the 'gap between thought, passion and personal embodiment.'

In his magnum opus *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (1958), Michael Polanyi introduced the term 'Tacit Knowing' into philosophy. Central to Polanyi's thinking was the belief that creative acts (especially acts of discovery) are charged with strong personal feelings and commitments. Arguing against the then-dominant position that science was somehow value-free, Polanyi sought to bring into creative tension a concern with reasoned and critical interrogation with other, more implicit or 'tacit' forms of knowing.

Sheets-Johnstone (2018:13) argues that with the Industrial Revolution, human beings became more sedentary and in so doing lost a sense of kinaesthetic and intuitive movement. Movement is the first means of communication that we have, while language is 'post-kinetic' (Sheets-Johnstone 2018, 3). It is in this shift away from movement (kinetic) to language (linguistic) knowing that Polanyi's theory of tacit knowledge resides, reclaiming a space in which embodied ways of knowing can be acknowledged.

According to Frost (2010, n.p.), explicit and tacit knowledge are two distinct categories of knowledge. He describes them as follows: 'Tacit Knowledge is uncodified and frequently based on personal experience, whereas Explicit Knowledge refers to codified knowledge, such as that found in papers.' Davies (2001, n.p.), argues that explicit knowledge is knowledge that the knower is able to articulate verbally. Tacit knowledge, on the other hand, is characterised by Polanyi as the 'practice of a skill, the reading of a physiognomy, sensing and speculative skills […]. [I]n all our transactions with the world around us, we use our body as our instrument […]. It jointly interprets dozens of clues in our eyes, in our memories, in muscles of every kind and in the labyrinth inside our skull' (1967, 303).

If all knowledge is initially embodied, there must be a relationship of dynamic interdependence between explicit and tacit knowledge (Brohm 2005, 14). For Krieger (2005, 351), embodiment is by definition a 'multilevel phenomenon, as it necessarily entails the interplay between bodies, components of bodies, and the world(s) in which the bodies live.' In this regard, it is fundamental to understand that individuals simultaneously 'have a body, are a body, and become a body' (Haskins 2015, 21). It may then be argued that the choreographer's body has a knowledge of its own. In the practice of his or her art, the choreographer responds to and articulates the lived knowledge of tacit experience. That is, the choreographer's body of knowledge is intuitively transferred and interpreted in the choreographic process. The explicit articulation of the choreography comes *from*, resides in and is interpreted *through* the choreographer's body.

The idea of the interpreting body suggests that experiences, thoughts and feelings are located within the body and inscribed in creative choreographic processes. Damasio (2012, 20) claims that the body is the root of the conscious mind and suggests that we need our bodies in order to feel and think. The mysterious interplay suggested here is articulated by choreographer Anna Halprin (1969, 50) and Klein (2007), who defines choreography as a 'creative act of setting the conditions for things to happen, the choreographer as the navigator, negotiator, and architect of a fluid environment that he/she himself, herself is part of' (1082).

Michael Polanyi's *Personal Knowledge* (1958) is open to many permutations of interpretation. This paper focuses on four interpretations of Michael Polanyi's philosophy proposed by Harald Grimen (1991). The Grimen interpretations explore new potentialities for contemporary choreographic strategies through creating and crafting embodied, dance-based physical theatre work.

Interruption

In 1991 Harald Grimen[2] drafted a working paper titled *Taus Kunnskap og organisasjonsstudier* (1991) that is discussed in detail in Zhenhua's article *Tacit Knowledge/ Knowing and the Problem of Articulation* (2003). Zhenhua (2003,11) notes that much has been written about the concept of tacit knowledge by scholars from several philosophical traditions – phenomenological, hermeneutical, Wittgensteinian and Polanyian. Zhenhua's immediate concern, however, lies with the problematics of the articulation of tacit knowledge. Zhenhua refers to the Norwegian philosopher Kjell S. Johannessen (2003, 11), who argues that 'knowledge and language are woven together in an indissoluble bond […].[T]he requirement that knowledge should have a linguistic articulation becomes an unconditional demand.' This 'unconditional demand' was what Polanyi contested in highlighting the importance of pre-linguistic, implicit understanding or tacit knowledge. Zhenhua (2003, 12–13) then goes on to unpack Grimen's four interpretations of Polyani's concept of tacit knowledge.

The Thesis of Under-Articulation

According to Zhenhua (2003, 12) the first interpretation of tacit knowledge that Grimen articulates can be called the *thesis of conscious under-articulation*. In this view, tacit knowledge is something that we consciously attempt to conceal, to avoid articulating it or to under-articulate it. For instance, in marriage or political compromise, it is wise for the partners not to voice all they know about each other. This conscious under-articulation helps maintain a good relationship in marriage or politics, which might well collapse in the event of over-articulation. In this sense, the un-articulation or under-articulation of what one knows is tacit because nobody talks about it.

This interpretation of tacit knowledge, according to Zhenhua, is more of sociological than epistemological interest. Yet in my view, it remains relevant to aspects of choreographic strategy.

Key concepts:

- Conscious under-articulation/choices
- Concealment
- Mutual understandings

The Gestalt Thesis

The second interpretation of tacit knowledge put forward by Grimen is the *Gestalt thesis of tacit knowledge*. Zhenhua (2003, 12) suggests that when one is engaged in a certain activity, like playing the piano, riding a bicycle, swimming, etc., one has to rely unproblematically on a certain background without which the activity cannot be fluently carried on. If one focuses on the background and tries to describe it in words, the act of articulation will obstruct the performance of the activity. Zhenhua (2003, 12) argues that the knowledge that we have of this 'unproblematic background' is a kind of tacit knowledge. This does not mean that the knowledge cannot be verbalised, just that it cannot be while we are performing the activity. In Grimen's view, this interpretation of tacit knowledge is clearly influenced by Gestalt psychology, so he calls it the 'Gestalt thesis of tacit knowledge' (Zhenhua 2003, 12).

I also turned to Gestalt therapy because of its concern with embodiment. Sabar suggests that 'Gestalt Therapy has a strong focus on embodiment' and is about seeing 'where the resistances to free-flowing expression of movement and energy in the body lie' (2013, 6). The therapy is interested in how we create and hold the conflicts within our bodies. The strategy is to discover how the six principles of Gestalt psychology can expose the conflicts within the body to generate an embodied experience for the participants, in an overall perspective of flow and anti-flow. The six principles of Gestalt psychology are figure/ground, similarity, proximity, continuity, closure and symmetry or order. In conceptualising the choreographic strategy for this section of the work I imaginatively invoked these principles.

Key concepts:

- Problem solving
- Bodily sensations
- Lived experience
- Perception
- Reflection

The Thesis of Epistemic Regionalism

The third interpretation can be characterised as *the thesis of epistemic regionalism*. Zhenhua (2003, 12) suggests that 'all the knowledge that one has, constitutes a vast, loosely knit and non-perspicuous system.' We cannot reflect on or articulate the whole system all at once: what we do is focus on smaller parts and articulate those. In this sense, we are all regionalists.

Epistemic regionalism recognises that knowledge is not universal and objective but rather shaped by social, cultural and historical contexts. This means that the knowledge that is produced, applied, learnt or experienced in one context may not be directly applicable or transferable to another context. For Polanyi, according to Grimen (1991), this means that tacit knowledge is not necessarily transferable because the specific factors that shape the acquisition and application of tacit knowledge may differ from one context to another. Accordingly, while no specific elements of knowledge are in principle inarticulable, the knowledge that we can articulate at any given moment is limited: '[t]here is no unifying perspective from which we can verbally articulate at the same time all the knowledge that we possess' (Zhenhua 2003, 13).

Key concepts:

- Regions
- Non-perspicuous
- Limited articulation

The Strong Thesis of Tacit Knowledge

The fourth interpretation Grimen (1991) labels *the strong thesis of tacit knowledge*: '[f]rom this perspective, there are specific kinds of knowledge that are in principle verbally unarticulatable [sic], which means that there exists a logical gap between our capacity for cognition, experience and action, on the one hand, and our capacity for verbal articulation, on the other' (Zhenhua 2003, 13). The knowledge that is in principle inarticulable is tacit knowledge. Zhenhua (2003, 13) argues that for Grimen this interpretation of tacit knowledge is more profound than the Gestalt thesis of tacit knowledge and the thesis of epistemic regionalism because neither claims that there are specific kinds of knowledge that are in principle inarticulable. Grimen posits that tacit knowledge in this strong sense does indeed exist: the knowledge of sense qualities, the knowledge of the identity of a gestalt, and the knowledge of the choreography of an action are all extremely difficult to verbalise.

To talk about tacit knowledge in this context does not mean that language is unnecessary but rather that language is inadequate for the tasks of obtaining and transferring such knowledge. This perspective highlights the logical gap between knowledge and language and affirms the existence of certain kinds of knowledge that can rarely be suitably put into words.

Key concepts:

- Body Articulations
- Language beyond words
- Lived experience

Fate

The next phase of the project led me into the studio to commence the choreographic process. A workable choreographic strategy was devised for each of the key concepts that emerged from my intuitive interpretations of Grimen, as described in the previous section. These will all be discussed in due course.

According to Kraaijenbrink (2019, 28), actions do indeed speak louder than words. Theory has its place, but experience is indispensable. It is through strategy and execution together that one gains clarity, solidifies priorities, creates engagement, achieves quantifiable results, and moves one step closer to realising one's vision. Strategies are fluid and evolving and no one strategy defines the tacit nature of the practice. Kraaijenbrink (2019, 30) suggests that true strategy appears implicitly in what we do – our processes, actions and routines. The challenge lies in making the strategy explicit by 'moving from the strategy concept towards the strategy execution' (Kraaijenbrink 2019, 31).

The Thesis of Under-Articulation

In this view, tacit knowledge is something that we consciously attempt to conceal, to avoid articulating or to under-articulate it. As a strategy within a choreographic framework, this interpretation becomes an interesting route to discovery for the choreographer and the performers. There are at least two ways of achieving this thesis within the choreographic process.

First, the choreographer may interpret the thesis from the point of view of 'keeping the performers in the dark' about some, if not all, of the processes, themes or journeys in the choreography.

Secondly, under-articulation can be a device for uncovering the emerging narrative of the work as well as the process of generating an embodied choreography.

The strategy for this section was one of intentional concealment and limited transparency in the creative process. Withholding knowledge of the choreographic work and process from the participants was intended to preserve elements of surprise, spontaneity and mystery. Consciously concealing themes, structures and titles served to create a sense of opacity and open-endedness during the process, allowing for multiple interpretations and engaging the participants in a more authentic way.

Concealing specific information from the participants became a way to encourage them to focus on their own individual roles and responsibilities, without being distracted by what others were doing. The strategy resulted in unpredictability, as the participants did not know exactly what to expect from their fellow participants, which resulted in a heightening of intuitive response.

One participant wrote the following about the process:

> I don't even know what happened but it was amazing. Even though we had not said a word, it felt like we had this incredible sense of group coherence, as if it was all 'planned out'. Interactions felt and appeared so real – so honest, so vulnerable.

One of the tasks developed from this strategy was: *The Letter L as Inspiration*.

At the first rehearsal, I asked the participants to think about the letter L, and how it can be represented through movement. They were then asked to write a list of words that start with the letter L – as many words as they could think of in one minute. The time limit was introduced to prevent them from overthinking or trying to think of the most evocative or expressive words. This encouraged them not to focus on what they thought I might be looking for but rather to respond spontaneously.

These responses were journaled and used as a starting point to develop an L-shaped movement vocabulary. This intention was to allow the participants to settle into the process through the body as opposed to focusing immediately on the expression and performance of the movement. Below are two examples of what the participants wrote.

Participant 1 wrote:

LoveLive	
Learn	Lazy
Laugh	Light
Leave	Lame
Look	Linger
Listen	Lose

Participant 2 wrote:

Loss Lament	
Lost	Liquid
Lover	Live
Law	Love
Limp	Longing

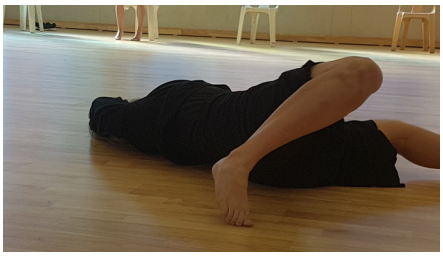


Figure 1: Participant exploring with the letter L on the floor.[3]



Figure 2: Two participants exploring the letter L together.

Next the participants were asked to experiment with different shapes and positions that resemble the letter L, such as a bent arm or leg, a diagonal line, or an L-shaped formation with the body.

Participants could choose to work alone or, if they gravitated towards another body, to explore with that body. This was all an attempt to provide shaping not only for the bodies in the work but also as possibilities for staging through floor patterns.

Although in the same space as each other, the participants were encouraged not to speak about what they were doing but rather to observe in silence how the other bodies were shaping, and explore how their shaping corresponded to, mirrored or contrasted with the others in the studio.

This initial task was purely focused on the shape of the letter in both upper and lower case. The concentration on shape, the body in space, was a point of departure to avoid delving too deeply or too quickly into emotional interpretation and making meaning.

I am a firm believer that meaning resides in the movements that we make and that we should not always approach movement from an emotional centre. The source material was thus deliberately withheld from the participants as per the choreographic strategy that emerged. This – the conscious under-articulation – made possible an entry point into the creative process that would not be enmeshed in emotional and interpretative over-analysis. I was hoping that the participants would respond intuitively, and I could gently immerse them in the process through body shaping.

The thesis of under-articulation became a choreographic strategy in the making of *L.I.F.E.: A History of Distance* (2017). It caused two things to happen in the studio. First, the performers became less self-conscious about meeting my brief for a specific section of the work, as they were encouraged to focus primarily on their own interpretations of the set task without being restricted by any notion of 'getting things right.' Secondly, it enabled an 'authenticity' of embodied experience to emerge from the performers creating movement. This in turn assisted me as a choreographer to unearth a variety of narratives and choreographic structures that may not have come to creative fruition if I had relied only on my own intuition.

Gestalt Thesis of Tacit Knowledge

Woodward (2013:283) argues that Gestalt psychologists emphasised the study of consciousness, like structuralist psychologists who used controlled introspection in sensory experiments. However, their insight was that both perceived forms (Gestalten) and the experienced world are already structured wholes.

Gestalt theorists followed the basic principle that 'the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.'[4] What this means is that the whole (a picture, a car, a moving image or series of images in a choreography) carries a different and altogether greater meaning than its components (paint, canvas, brush, movement, body shape, movement phrases). It is argued that a view of the whole enables cognitive understanding to take place. The human mind is conditioned to make meaning from images and thus reconfigures and reimagines the parts that are presented visually into an understanding of a whole. Visually and psychologically, we attempt to make order out of chaos, to create harmony or structure from seemingly disconnected bits of information.



Figure 3: Participants frozen waiting for their partners to unfreeze them



Figure 4: Partnering with a frozen body

As a choreographic strategy, this thesis can be construed in several ways: first, as choreographer, I am confronted with different bodies (parts) and am tasked with making sense of them together (whole); secondly, the structural parts of the choreographic work may be seen as parts that when viewed together become a functioning whole; and thirdly, within each part of the choreography, there are parts that form a whole section of choreography.

For the Gestalt thesis to become workable as a choreographic strategy, I turned to Gestalt Therapy. I focussed on working with the idea of conflict within the body and the group by removing the free flow of movement and the organic transferences of weight and transition within partnering work and patterns. The participants were tasked with creating a series of duets and trios, with the idea that one or more partners would remain 'frozen,' to unearth the possibilities of creating an embodied partnering moment through the seemingly dis-embodied task.

One of the tasks created for this section is called: *Freeze/Unfreeze*.

The primary focus of this task was the Gestalt principle of closure. In typical partnering encounters, participants would be encouraged to work carefully with flow and weight distribution. This task disrupts those principles. The participants were divided into pairs and labelled A and B. Partner A freezes in a position and Partner B attempts to move them. Partner A resists as much as possible. Once Partner B is able to move Partner A then Partner A moves to another point in the space and freezes again. The task was repeated until a series of freeze/unfreeze images had been generated.

In this first task, I was intrigued by what would happen if I removed the organic sense of flow and weight transference from a duet. Throughout my training and professional life the focus had always been on giving and receiving weight equally and on working carefully with a partner in order to find an organic sense of flow. What if I remove the flow? What if I remove the organic? How would this translate using Gestalt principles into a sense of closure, into a sense of similarity? Would I as the choreographer still discern a sense of organic partnership and relationship in the duet, or would I simply be observing the task?

The purpose of this task was to explore the concept of closure in partnering encounters, with participants engaging in a series of freeze/unfreeze images and creating frozen duets and trios. The task involved the partners entering a process of negotiation and establishing a working relationship, with a focus on the static body and the principle of figure/ground.

The participants were then asked to shift their focus to the person/people trying to unfreeze the frozen, creating a contrast between flow and anti-flow that was then used in the structuring of the section. The task provided a creative and engaging encounter for the participants as they explored the dynamics of partnering and the concept of closure through physical movement and negotiation. The use of freeze/unfreeze images and the focus on figure/ground principles created an unusual perspective on the duet. As I was watching the participants perform the task, I was willing them on internally, knowing what the struggle to move a body must feel like and in so doing, awareness of my own body became part of the encounter observed.

The Gestalt principles had moved beyond visual perception and become a bodily perception. This became what I can only refer to as external proprioception. Proprioception, according to Barlow (2018, 38), refers to one's awareness of one's body position and movement in space, one's ability to sense and understand the orientation, movement, and position of one's body parts without relying on visual or auditory feedback. Observing the frozen partnering, I could sense what should have been happening and intuitively access the conflict that the partner who was attempting to unfreeze was feeling. This accentuated the engagement of my mirror neurons, the neurons that play a crucial role in the understanding of others' actions, intentions, and emotions (Caramazza et al. 2014, 2–4). It is thought that mirror neurons are integral to the process of imitation and learning, as they allow individuals to replicate observed movements and behaviours.

It became clear that the task I had generated from the choreographic strategy had moved beyond the visual and became a bodily story for me as observer.

The Thesis of Epistemic Regionalism

The thesis of epistemic regionalism suggests that at any given moment, one can only reflect on small parts of one's knowledge system and verbalise them. In the present context, this means that the choreographer and the performers have to be engaged in continuous reflection on and articulation of ideas and processes. The choreographer has to understand that 'too much information' would be a source of overload that could result in the performers not being able to engage with specific tasks, ideas, narratives, etc. effectively. If we try to consider all that is happening all at once, we might muddle the connections between the myriad processes and embodied possibilities of the choreographic work.

It is thus vital for the choreographer to develop a series of regions to continue the creative process in the studio: to focus on these smaller regions in relation to each other and allow the interpretative ability of the performers to connect them together and articulate the connections. These regions comprise many elements of the choreography and the choreographic process: movement phrases, intent, narratives, themes and motifs.

The *thesis of epistemic regionalism* necessitates continuous reflection and articulation. There will always be more regions to uncover and consider in relation to each other depending on the perspective that the choreographer and performers bring to bear. While no specific elements of knowledge are in principle inarticulable, we simply cannot articulate at the same time all the knowledge that we possess.

In the first rehearsal for this section of the exploration, I devised and taught the participants a phrase of movement. This task was called *Fate*. The phrase was inspired by a passage I had written myself:

> Once there was a man who lived his life with an intense fear of death. He spent his days in a constant state of anxiety, always searching for ways to outrun the inevitable end that he knew was coming.

His body was tired.

In that moment, the man realised the futility of his quest. He saw that his fear of death had consumed his entire life, preventing him from truly living and experiencing the beauty and wonder of the world around him. And in his final moments, the man wept for all the years he had lost, and for all the beauty he had failed to see.

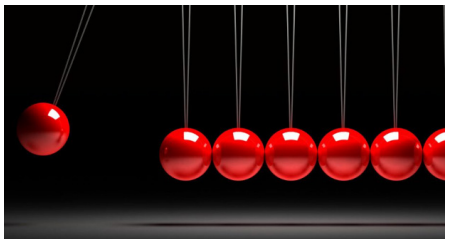


Figure 5: Newton's third law of motion.[5]

I generated a movement phrase from the above. The reason for teaching the participants a phrase of movement, instead of having them respond through movement, was to capture my subjective experience and sense of motion in their bodies. The purpose of their finding their 'stories' within my 'story' was to take some pressure off them and get them to focus on one idea from a kinetic point of view. What they would perform would then be predetermined, as though fate's hand were guiding them forward. I would have a heavy hand in the crafting of this moment.

Epistemic regionalism accentuates how knowledge is a collection of a series of events, traditions and ideas accumulated over time. Each event builds on the next: every action has a reaction, like the ripples of water when you drop a pebble into a pond. Working with this in mind I used 'accumulation' as a crafting device to build the beginning of the section. All the participants performed the same phrase, and because the focus was the accumulation and regionalism of the movement (the smaller parts of each moment within the phrase), they executed it as a group.

Next, I presented the participants with an image that depicts Newton's Third Law of Motion (Action/Reaction). Unusually, we discussed the image as a group so as to bring together various interpretations of the image and how it relates to the idea of fate. Even though we discussed the concept of fate, it was never made explicit that this is what the section was titled or how it related to the work as a whole.

The participants were tasked with finding their own link between the image and the experience of the accumulated phrase. Even though we react differently to situations, we are all part of a system where every action results in an equal, yet opposite, reaction. But because we are all part of the same system, we actually do have similar reactions and experiences. We cannot always articulate the similarity because our focus is limited by the vagueness of what binds us together. This task aimed to find common ground and connections between seemingly disparate or conflicting ideas, to synthesise them into a more cohesive understanding.

The emphasis in this task remained on the movement and execution of the movement as opposed to starting from a place of emotional or personal response. Accepting fatalism allows the bodies to execute the journey of the movement. From a conceptual standpoint, this also provides a clear contrast between the self's conflict and resistance to death and the hand of fate guiding the self towards an inevitable conclusion.

The Strong Thesis of Tacit Knowledge

In this perspective, there are indeed specific kinds of knowledge that are inarticulable, which means that there is a logical gap between our capacity for cognition, experience and action, on the one hand, and our capacity for verbalisation, on the other. Adopted as a strategy for choreography, it prompts the choreographer to approach the choreography through a series of tasks that elicit movement and dance responses that may not have been achieved if they had first been verbalised. Allowing the performers to respond from their lived experience and to articulate the seemingly inarticulable through the body results in an embodied response that is

individual and unique to each performer, yet still framed by the intent of the choreographer. The notion of tacit knowledge must be invoked because language is not sufficient for obtaining and transferring the kind of knowledge in question.

To generate a movement language and performance response for this section I decided to only include one task. The task is a collection of ideas and reminiscences, in a way like a eulogy. I only wanted one task so that I could give the participants highly specific guidance. The primary objective was to have each participant develop a gesture or movement that represented *a last breath*.



Figure 6: Participants exploring final breath gestures

I wanted to explore the concept of mortality and its impact on movement and emotion. Firstly, I had the participants stand in a circle. I asked the participants to close their eyes and imagine that they were facing their mortality (it could be represented as a figure, an abstract form, a shape, a colour, or a god). They were then asked to explore this visualisation through movement. This choreography task is meant to involve a personal exploration of their emotions and responses to the idea of their mortality, inviting them to be vulnerable and honest in their physical responses as no one else would know what they were feeling or expressing. The movement could be a subtle gesture or a larger movement depending on their expression and experience. I encouraged them to allow their body to express what they were feeling and to think about how they would respond to the news of their own death. Would you fight it, accept it, or try to change it?

I then asked them to consider how they would want to be remembered after they are gone. Would you want people to remember you as a fighter, someone who never gave up, or someone who accepted their fate with grace and dignity? Let your final movements reflect your desired legacy.

The first participant was instructed to go and select a point in the space that carried significance for her in relation to the journey that she had been on since the beginning of *Lamentation*. The other participants would approach where she was and would one by one pick up on her movement or gesture.

When they felt that they had made enough of a statement with the gesture they would break off and move to another point in the space – one at a time. The next participant would then respond with a movement of their own that built on the first movement, either by mirroring, contrasting, or elaborating on it. This call-and-response pattern continued until each participant had had a turn to initiate a movement and respond to a movement. The participants were encouraged to respond to each other's movements in real time, as it were, without anticipating or planning their responses.

This ritual of repetition focused on intuitive emotional responses. The idea was that with each iteration of the rehearsal process, and even in performance, the gestures would be entirely spontaneous. Each response was thus inarticulable, something that each participant did without knowing why they did it: something intangible and ephemeral.

According to Grimen's terminology, the concept of articulation covers more than just language. Besides verbal articulation, we have other modes of articulation, such as, for instance, action. In this choreographic strategy, the body and its movements become the language of the work, which requires the choreographer to embrace the articulation of the body as an expression inarticulable in words.

Eulogy

Grimen holds that action as a mode of articulation is as fundamental as language. Tacit knowledge that cannot be fully articulated in words can be articulated in ac-

tion. The theory of tacit knowledge thus enhances our sensitivity to non-verbal modes of articulation.

Using my practical experience in tandem with an academic study, this paper provides insights into my choreographic processes. One of the key features of practitioner knowledge is that it is often context specific. After 25 years of practice, I have developed certain skills and preferences in my creative work and the way in which I approach choreography.

This work and process is a culmination of my life as an academic, choreographer and performer. As a creative person, I have always trusted my gut and intuition in the making of work. Here, for the first time, I had actively to consider what I was doing in a theoretically meaningful way.

Epilogue

I approached this research to document and articulate my own attitudes and practice in respect of embodiment, to uncover my own embedded or implicit approach to choreography by engaging with some aspects of the philosophy of embodiment. Perhaps my inquiry stemmed from my own inability to always immerse myself completely in performance, while always expecting this from my participants.

As the process unfolded I reflected on how I would be able to get my participants to engage with existential concepts and the fact of their mortality through *L.I.F.E.* This involved contemplating my own biases and problematics to uncover something meaningful about my creative process. The journey of this theoretical and creative work helped to elucidate something that I thought I knew but did not know how I knew it, or even precisely what it was that I knew.

L.I.F.E. is a culmination of my experiences as a performer, researcher and human being, trying to decipher how my life's journey has affected me creatively, what it is that I have learnt along my journey and what it is that I 'do.' In 2017 I set out to make *L.I.F.E.* to reflect not only the theoretical framework I had devised but also the work that I had made in the past to try and understand myself and how my research and my talent might move my work in a new direction.

L.I.F.E. is in effect my own living eulogy, my reflection on my time spent with others and this research, the result of sustained introspection and re-evaluation of who I am, what I have accomplished and who and what I would regret 'missing' if I were to leave now. I return from that place of introspection and emerge as me. I am what I know and as a choreographing, sentient being, I can only return to myself, find my story in others and project this self to an audience through the kinaesthetic form of expression that is dance. I realise that I often doubt my ability and doubt the implicit, intuitive process at play. The 'reflective cycle' served to illuminate my intuitive responses and helped me to understand the underlying values and motivations that shape my choices.

In sum, the heart of this research was my choreographic intuition and seeking a means to articulate it. It was perhaps inevitable that I would focus on the journey of my life and my creative process. Sometimes I wondered whether the research would produce something fresh and exciting for me or whether I would fall into old patterns and habitual modes of doing and being. The story of my life in the past few years, up to this point in 2023, has vindicated the autoethnographic project of the research in respect of my approach toward embodiment in choreography. Perhaps I am a little closer to understanding what it means to choreograph a life.

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Notes

1 The phrase *the art of choreography* is attributed to Green (2010) and is used repeatedly in this paper.

2 Harald Grimen 'Taus Kunnskap og organisasjonsstudier' ('Tacit Knowledge and the Study of Organisation,') LOS-Center, working paper, Bergen, 1991. The original text is in Norwegian. The English translation was first prepared by Bjoern Wikner, then improved by Judith Lasen and finally approved by Harald Grimen. Unfortunately, Harald Grimen passed away in 2007 and according to his colleague Judith Lasen at Bergen University there is no longer a copy of the working paper available. This research paper therefore makes use of Yu Zhenhua's (2003) discussion of Grimen's working paper

3 All photographs by Westley Smith (2017).

4 http://facweb.cs.depaul.edu/sgrais/gestalt_principles.htm

5 https://www.lbbonline.com/news/newtons-third-law-of-advertising-for-every-action-a-creative-reaction

FROM COSMOPOLITANISM TO COSMOLOGY AND BACK AGAIN: CO-CURATING A PRACTICE-CENTRED SOUTH AFRICAN JAZZ COLLECTIVE, 2020-2022

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Background

Since 2005 as a researcher, and since the early 1990s as an organiser who worked in Pretoria as South Africa transitioned towards democracy, Brett Pyper has had the privilege of knowing a community of practice that occupies a distinct, under-recognised position in the country's internationally famous jazz culture. Known variously as jazz appreciation societies, social clubs or *stokvels* (mutual aid associations), these township-based collectives played no small part, during the long night of apartheid, in preserving and developing the vibrant, cosmopolitan African cultures that were suppressed and dispersed under racial and ethnic segregation policies. They did so in spite of restrictions on public gatherings, and in communities with hardly any civic or cultural amenities. After the formal end of apartheid and the lifting of cultural boycotts in the 1990s, the country's reintegration into circuits of international cultural exchange resulted in the establishment of several globally benchmarked festivals. Meanwhile, these community-based jazz societies underwent their own efflorescence, though in relative isolation from the festivals that take place in downtown convention centres for a globally mobile, relatively elite clientele. These developments emblematise the promise as well as the limitations of the post-apartheid transition: while the existence of platforms for international jazz luminaries serves as a powerful symbol of change and a vehicle for the assertion of transnational cultural and political ties, the audience for jazz music in South Africa remains largely excluded from participating in these celebrations of avowedly post-apartheid culture.

As a South African music researcher who grew up and worked in the transitioning public sphere in and around Pretoria, later directing a festival with a national mandate, Pyper's work involves a long-term commitment to public engagement and scholarship informing one another. Curation has been associated with museums and the visual arts, and has in recent decades also come to include the kinds of avant-garde performances associated with so-called live art. This paper and the project on which it reports reflect on the affordances of using the term to refer to projects in which the programming or organising of music performance are approached as an exercise in knowledge production and/or dissemination, beyond contemporary heritage or fine art practices. The collaborative project reported on here centres not only on the *study of* public jazz ecologies but also on *studying in* them, with the practitioners as co-curators. As a particular take on practice-led research, it thus attempts to de-objectify the study of cultural worlds and take on board the needs and perspectives of communities *not only about, but with whom* research is conducted. The collaboration in which we have become involved has come to be called the Cosmopolitan Collective (introduced below). It initially emerged as an attempt to assist jazz practitioners in and around Mamelodi, where Pyper's research relationships have been concentrated (see Pyper 2014), to sustain their practice amidst COVID-19 pandemic conditions. As detailed below, this work has taken the form of live events, initially socially distanced, in community venues as well as on campuses, and online. Beyond navigating the disruptions of the pandemic, our intention was also to address some of the underlying inequalities that characterise so much of life in what some now refer to as the post-postapartheid context.[1]

The project has combined historical and contemporary investigation with artistic, practice and action research methodologies, with much of its activity taking place in the public domain. The broader project of which it is a part involves four components: 1) reading/theorising, 2) making/musicking, 3) organising and 4) teaching/learning as complementary, mutually informing modes of knowledge production. Our focus here is on two aspects within the larger project: musicking and the pedagogical strategies entailed in teaching/learning activities (a fuller account of all the components is given in Pyper's forthcoming monograph). While mindful of the

risks of discourses of "inclusion" (Ahmed 2012), the project takes on the challenge of co-curating knowledge about this rich, transmodal[2] and interdependent South African jazz culture, deliberately working across the socio-economic, genre-based, generational and related social divides that characterise the neoliberal, post-apartheid public sphere.

Initially concerned with the reading and understanding of cosmopolitanism in West and Southern African settings through socio-cultural phenomena and interaction with the jazz music of John Coltrane, this project presented an opportunity to showcase dialogical parallels between Accra, Ghana and Johannesburg, South Africa. Focusing on the academic and practice-based implications of the work of Steven Feld (introduced below), the project was first conceived of as a residency in the School of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand. Although this did not unfold in exactly the manner intended because of the pandemic, it evolved into a multi-stakeholder collaboration involving researchers from different departments in the university and reached out to communities of practice not often recognised as research collaborators. This evolution was not altogether pre-conceived. It responded to recognition of the evolving need for input from various disciplines to curate the work. In addition, the project attracted the involvement of value-adding entities that provided financial and other support for curatorial events and content creation. It is this integration of thoughts and activities in the practice of curation that the present paper addresses. In the process, it presents an argument for curatorial practice as artistic research. Although this project works mainly with the idea of arts ecologies, a similar concept was framed as a system of creativity by Moshugi (2022). In a study that centralises artistic practice as the object, subject and tool of inquiry, Moshugi outlines the complexity of creative environments and the often overlooked yet central activities that enable the manifestation and circulation of artistic content. This project reported on here recognises the multiplicity of activities and role-players involved.

Pyper's position as a researcher of jazz appreciation societies, an administrator in the School of Arts, and supervisor of artistic research projects, enabled a rare inter-departmental, trans- and multidisciplinary engagement to take place. As indicated in this paper, the project integrated several methods of data collection with the collaboration of academics, practitioners and communities. Underscoring the approach was a growing realisation that curation entails the interdependence of a network of activities and collaborators at the levels of both research and practice. Importantly, this paper illustrates how listening, making, creating, performing and organising are forms of knowing that all culminate in curation as a mode of research.

The Emergence and Consolidation of the Cosmopolitan Collective, 2020–2022

In March 2020, on the very eve of global pandemic lockdowns, a pan-African arts residency was in preparation in the Wits School of Arts (WSOA), linking jazz practitioners in the Gauteng city region around Johannesburg and Pretoria with a group of multi-media jazz experimentalists from Ghana. Inspired by the work of the Anyaa Arts Kollektif in Accra and their collaboration with the preeminent anthropologist of sound, Prof. Steven Feld (a former lecturer of Pyper's), the project initially set out to document diverse interdisciplinary expressions of jazz across Africa and its diaspora and to enable collaboration between some of its contemporary practitioners.[3] Set against longstanding, relatively elite, Euro-American manifestations of cosmopolitanism, this project took its coordinates from an extensive, transdisciplinary literature on pluralised understandings of the term, as the concept is played out in everyday, non-elite contexts around the globe.[4] From a South African perspective, it



is of considerable interest to ascertain how, amidst the racial segregation associated with colonialism and apartheid, so much grassroots cultural expression has been decidedly cosmopolitan in scope. The most prominent example is South African jazz culture, though other musics (including choral, operatic and a range of neotraditional popular styles) also register expressions of musical cosmopolitanism in their own ways. Our initial hope as organisers simply to postpone activities for a few weeks or months after the first lockdown yielded, as the pandemic dragged on, to the imperative to reconceive the entire intended pan-African exchange. This led to the artistic team in the WSOA convening online listening and study sessions to engage with the Anyaa Arts Kollektif's extensive set of albums and films, as well as Feld's monograph *Jazz Cosmopolitanism in Accra* (2012), which recounted the making of these multimedia materials and theorised their significance. The Wits group's intention then shifted to formulating a musical response to the recorded Ghanaian collaboration in the form of a performance that could be live-streamed to our intended visitors and recorded for subsequent reference.

On the 30th of October 2020, this intention was realised in Johannesburg (during a lull between the first and second waves of the pandemic) with the staging of a special performance in the Wits Theatre, which remained closed to the general public. The concert featured lecturers, students and alumni of the Music Department under the musical co-direction of the late Andre Petersen and Chantal Willie-Petersen, as well as two veteran musician-researchers who had long expressed interest, Prince Lengoasa and Salim Washington (see Appendix 1 for a list of the full cast). The performance was documented by a Master of Fine Art photography student, and live-streamed by a class of Film & TV students under the guidance of a lecturer focusing on the skill of filming live performance. The physical event as well as its online presentation were organised by the School's Festival Study Group, an international network convened by Oladele Ayorinde, then a PhD candidate in the WSOA who had become an associate of the Department of Cultural Policy and Management (CPM). It was this group that decided to brand the concert "Cosmology" to underscore the resonances between our theoretical interest in jazz cosmopolitanism and the musical titling practices of jazz musicians ranging from Charlie Parker to Zim Ngqawana and the Afro-futurist legacies of Sun Ra and the Afro-diasporic spiritual imaginaries to which they gestured.

This already broadly collaborative group from across the School of Arts was joined by perhaps the most distinctive additional constituency: members of the jazz appreciation community from Mamelodi East of Pretoria/Tshwane. They attended under carefully socially distanced conditions as a live, invited audience. Informed by Pyper's PhD research, the event aimed, curatorially, to foreground the significant role that community-based jazz appreciation clubs around Tshwane continue to play in creating culturally resonant grassroots social settings for the music. It also sought to recognise their creativity and the broader implications of their contribution to the musical elaboration of public space in a transitioning South Africa (Pyper 2014). With this in mind, the festival study group subtitled the concert "Not Another Jazz Festival."

The unprecedented circumstances occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a crisis that not even the apartheid system at its height had precipitated for jazz appreciation communities: a blanket prohibition of social gatherings. Faced with the predicament of how to sustain their practice and the sociability that is central to it, the Cosmology concert acquired a significance that not even its organisers or featured musicians had fully anticipated. On the evening of the concert, this was most strikingly evident in the presence, among the invited jazz appreciation



audience in the Wits Theatre, of several practitioners of the solo improvised dance form practised at jazz appreciation sessions known as *diga*.

When they took to the stage, unscripted, these diggers (*digas*) introduced a new, dynamic relationship between the performers and the audience, to the surprise of the seasoned jazz audience online and several of the musicians themselves. To the colleagues involved from Wits, the bringing together of these communities of practice – professional musicians with grassroots jazz appreciation practitioners – felt transformative from multiple perspectives: musical, curatorial, social and pedagogical.

It also soon became evident that that sense was reciprocated. In the week after the Cosmology concert, our community partners elected to form a new collaborative structure, the Cosmopolitan Collective, to build on the potential that the Cosmology concert had demonstrated for role players who usually operated separately to work together to sustain community-based jazz gatherings, expression and research. The extended public humanities and practice-centred collaboration that has ensued has become a unique, experimental, and still developing collaboration between interconnected communities of practice from Mamelodi and its surrounds: jazz collectors and appreciators, dancers (*digas*), musicians, heritage activists, music educators and researchers. The common intention has been to introduce new, more inclusive ways of working together to sustain grassroots jazz cultures, in communities and also in mainstream public venues.

Research engagements with jazz appreciation societies have subsequently turned into an intensely participatory collaboration, on as well as off-campus, and have involved undergraduate students, postgraduate researchers as well as practitioners from around Mamelodi, many of whom have become co-organisers and co-researchers. Based on principles of reciprocity, mutuality, transparency and collaboration, and drawing on the hospitality and conviviality central to the culture, the project has come to centre on intergenerational knowledge interactions within and beyond the community.

As of the end of 2022, the Collective has presented several jazz concerts in community venues, and two in university theatres (after the initial Cosmology concert at Wits). We have experimented with local models for cultural organising that enable inclusive cultural participation and expression alongside the heavily consumption-based models that have tended to prevail in the jazz festival sector. These concerts have also been embedded in a developing action research project, encompassing oral history work that has fed into some of the concerts, and a yearlong residency in the Department of Cultural Policy and Management in the WSOA. A timeline of these activities appears in Appendix 2. We now turn our attention to aspects of the broader project that have advanced African artistic research and pedagogy, before reflecting on the gains made, the challenges encountered, and how the initial concepts developed (in ways both anticipated and unforeseen) as the activities unfolded.

Advancing African Artistic Research and Pedagogy through the Cosmopolitan Collective

The conference for which the present paper was formulated was concerned with interrelationships among artistic research, pedagogy and artistic practice in Africa. The emergence of the Cosmopolitan Collective and its subsequent activities have entailed various practices associated with knowledge production in relation to jazz music. Underscored by research interests and the collaboration of multiple stake-

holders, the project has provided a platform for both interdisciplinary and extra-academic action and interaction. The idea of cosmology depicts the expanding spheres in which these practices unfold. It is within this metaphorical jazz cosmology that cosmopolitanism as an expansive way of being intersects with various contexts of practice. The section that follows focuses on music-based learning and research with reference to three of the concerts presented in university spaces: the original Cosmology concert in October 2020, and two concerts featuring Abbey Cindi and his band, under the name of the United States of Africa, in April and September of 2022. This is followed by a brief discussion of what these concerts have meant for our pedagogies.

Musicking

Musicking happened at the level of curation (the selection and sequencing of, and commentary on, repertoire), creation (composition and arranging) and performing (interpretation and expression).[5] Kgomotso Moshugi participated in preparations for the pan-African residency as well as the reading/listening group that ensued when the pandemic disrupted those plans, and arranged some vocal pieces as a member of the musical team that prepared for the concert. Drawing on our experiences in our respective roles, we narrow the focus here to music programming. Reading Feld's reflections and interactions with the Anyaa Arts Kollektif in Accra not only provided the initial prompt for the possible collaboration but also offered a conceptual framework and theoretical premise for engagement with the music. For several members of the WSOA team, the Anyaa recordings rather than an encounter with Feld's writings were the primary point of engagement with the music.[6] Given the centrality of John Coltrane's music to Steven Feld's early interactions with what became the Anyaa Arts Kollektif, the WSOA team responded with a Coltranean take from South African musical perspectives. The first concert performance brought together on stage the skills and participation of experienced practitioners and acclaimed scholars as well as students and early career artists (see Appendix 1 for a list of the musical forces convened). Chantal Willie-Petersen directed the music with Andre Petersen. In addition to arranging several pieces for the ensemble, she asked the participating professional musicians each to choose and arrange a piece of their choice for the joint performance. Working with the ideas of cosmology and cosmopolitanism in relation to Coltrane's legacy, she drew attention to the question of gender in jazz music by integrating works of female composers, including Alice Coltrane.

Chantal Willie-Petersen produced a new musical arrangement of John Coltrane's iconic standard, "Giant Steps," to which Kgomotso Moshugi contributed a vocal arrangement. This displaced the traditional instrumental virtuosity of the piece with a distinctly South African contribution to jazz practice: the emphasis on the singing voice in multivocal textures. The juxtaposition of the latter with "Blue Nile" by Alice Coltrane, also arranged by Chantal Willie-Petersen, invited a comparative listening and demonstrated Alice Coltrane's stature as a composer alongside her luminary husband. These two musical selections and arrangements together pivoted the programme towards a decidedly African take on the jazz repertoire, starting with Salim Washington's piece "Oshun," inspired by West African cosmological and musical referents, and grounding the final stretch of the programme in works by six South African jazz composers who in different ways and to differing degrees reflect Coltranean influences.[7] The presence of *diga* dancers while these pieces were performed of course added a decisively South African improvisational component.

The next curated programme presented eighteen months later centred on Abbey Cindi, a veteran musician who was at the helm of creating the Malombo jazz

sound in Mamelodi in the 1960s. Cindi had a chance not only to talk about the music but to also teach it to a band of young players who performed with him in the Chris Seabrooke Hall at the University of the Witwatersrand on 30 April 2022, and at the University of Johannesburg's Art Centre on 3 September 2022.[8] The performances drew mainly from his re-issued album *The United States of Africa*, self-produced in 2008 but no longer available. The organisers of the concerts sought to create a platform for the sharing of musical culture between musicians of different generations, and for disseminating it to a contemporary audience, affirming its local heritage. Kgomotso Moshugi, as a co-researcher straddling the artistic and theoretical aspects of the project, re-imagined and recontextualised the music of Cindi by focusing on the theme of black struggle and the issue of land. He connected Cindi's music to the work of choral composers through *a cappella* arrangements performed by No Limits, the five-voice ensemble of which he is a member. During the performance at UJ, they performed with Cindi playing the harmonica in the lead. Another on-stage collaboration with Cindi featured seasoned musician and trumpeter Prince Lengoasa, a resident musician within the Cosmopolitan Collective fold since the first Cosmology concert. As a whole, this work focused on using musical arranging and performance to share a musical history in ways that performatively and ideologically interacted with the present. Through arranging (a re-organisation of musical elements) as research, Moshugi connected historical works with his own ideas to generate re-imagined versions for contemporary audiences. In other words, arranging as a research method produced output under the rubric of "the past in the present." It utilised artistic forms to transmit vocal aesthetics and communicate social issues in ways that transcended historical distance. This segment of the project illustrated how, through arranging and performance, the works and ideas of composers can be afforded an extended life cycle.[9]

Other performances organised by the Cosmopolitan Collective have featured local bands whose musical approach was not closely curated in the way described above, but which offered additional, often vernacular, perspectives on cosmopolitanism and jazz. Using local idioms and cultural references, musicians indicated their awareness of other, international repertoires, even in presenting their original compositions or interpretations of borrowed repertoires. This manifested in the choice of conventional band formations with keyboards, drums, bass and horns or lead guitar, on the one hand, and the incorporation of indigenous drums or multiple keys, on the other. These bands participated in the events on the basis of their roots in the local jazz community in Greater Tshwane. Their knowledge of this culture informed repertoire selections and enabled connections with the audiences, underscoring the importance of programming and artist line-ups at such events. An additional milestone was a specially convened workshop, lecture and performance focusing on Malombo jazz. *Diga* dance, initially a surprise to audiences in more mainstream venues, has become a crucial part of these events and performances, an expression of appreciation and a culturally resonant means of active participation.

Pedagogy and the Transfer of Knowledge

The concerts described above enabled a multi-directional pedagogy through collaboration and interdisciplinarity centred on jazz musical practices. Each stakeholder brought their strengths and interests. Students learnt new music or new arrangements of Coltrane standards and played them under the direction of, and with, their lecturers and professional peers. Simultaneously, community members made their way into university theatres, often for the first time, and university researchers worked with self-organised jazz communities, with the common aim of enriching their respective practices through mutual learning. The often-invisible social la-

bour of the jazz appreciation community has been affirmed, and some members have expressed interest in joining the academy to learn more. The university is generating forms of output and knowledge based on the developing relationship. Through the initiative, some students are embarking on research projects related to the Collective's work. Extending beyond music studies and research, the Cultural Policy and Management MA degree programme has considered the Cosmopolitan Collective as a case study for a course titled Culture, Creativity and the Economy, focusing on the informal economic models at play around the forms of sociomusical practice involved.

Through participation in conferences to share the research process and outcomes, this project acquires a layer of engagement for ongoing reflection, meaning-making and ultimately, theorising the findings made. The project has yielded rich data in the form of autoethnographies, multimedia recordings of interviews and performances, and a range of archival materials. Central to these is the jazz musical practice imbricated with other arts practices that complement, support or enable wide-ranging cultural participation.

Conclusion

The condensed overview offered above necessarily focuses on certain aspects of the ongoing collaboration at the expense of others. In addition to the musical factors, the Cosmopolitan Collective presents an opportunity to consider arts-enabling practices in parallel to more familiar arts-based, arts-related or arts-informed creative research. The administrative is in dialogue with the artistic at the level of research values and propositions in ways that invite further exploration. Jazz appreciators, initially a relatively obscure community flying under the radar of much of the South African jazz scene, have become central members of the Collective. The Collective entails an ongoing, intensive collaboration in musical creation, event organising and knowledge production with the potential to yield insights that reach well beyond its initial pandemic context and through which we continue to explore the interface between artistic research and pedagogy. We would count among the successes of the Collective the strengthening of relationships, despite the multiple fractures within South African society and the micropolitics within jazz appreciation communities. As the project navigates the terrain on which a significantly depleted professional arts sector finds itself after the COVID-19 pandemic,[10] the sustainability both of the professional jazz scene and the project itself remains an ongoing challenge. It is hoped that the Collective will remain a venue for ongoing reflection on curatorial practice in the context of jazz cosmopolitanism and cosmology.

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Appendix 1

Musicians featured in the Cosmology Concert (October 2020)

Convenor/director:
Brett Pyper conceived the project, appointed and coordinated the creative team, and informed the selection of music and the creative research approach to be followed by presenting and arranging lectures, reading and listening group meetings, a colloquium on African jazz cosmopolitanism, and public engagements with jazz appreciation societies and the online public.

Creative team:
- Musical directors: Andre Petersen & Chantal Willie-Petersen (WSOA Music Department staff)
- Featured arranger and vocalist: Kgomotso Moshugi (WSOA Postdoctoral Fellow, previously: music PhD student and teaching assistant)

Featured guest instrumentalists:
- Salim Washington (UKZN; saxophones, flute, etc.)
- Prince Lengoasa (trumpet, continuing WSOA Music MMus student)
- Thabo Rapoo (percussion, occasional WSOA Heritage student)

Band members:
- Sphelelo Mazibuko (drums, WSOA Music Department staff)
- Yonela Mnana (piano, WSOA Music PhD student)
- Andre Petersen (piano, WSOA Music Department staff)
- Chantal Willie-Petersen (bass, WSOA Music Department staff)

Featured vocalists:
- Keoraptese Kolwane (WSOA Music Department MMus alumna)
- Lindiwe Maxolo (WSOA Music Department staff)
- Denay Willie (WSOA Music Department staff)

Vocal ensemble (all undergraduate WSOA Music students):
- Thembekile Duze
- Boniswa Hlongwane
- Mathapelo Matabane
- Motswedi Modiba
- Kgaugelo Modise
- Sasha (Xola) Phakane

Appendix 2

1. Attendance and participation at a socially distanced, livestreamed performance titled *Cosmology* at the Wits Theatre in October 2020 that inspired the Collective's formation.
2. Convening a community concert in Mamelodi township in Dec. 2020 on the Reconciliation Day holiday.
3. Convening a community concert in Mathibestad village in May 2021 to mark International Jazz Day.
4. Presenting a community concert in Atteridgeville township in January 2022 at the start of a yearlong residency in the Dept. of Cultural Policy & Management (CPM) in the WSOA.
5. A community-led research project to honour veteran artists, led by the heritage working group of the Mamelodi Arts & Culture Forum (MACFO), who have hosted Wits student excursions and joined others.
6. Presenting two concerts for veteran musician Bra Abbey Cindi, including recruiting a new band of young musicians from the community under his leadership and re-issuing an out-of-print album of his music. Work continues on a documentary film and a book by community-based researchers.
7. Hosting an exchange with "chilombist" music researchers/teachers/activists from Rio de Janeiro in April 2022 with the intention of establishing a transnational "sound praxis" collaboration.
8. Presenting a community concert in Mabopane in August 2022.
9. A prominent public concert co-produced with UJ and UKZN in September 2022.
10. Presenting a Heritage Day workshop, lecture and performance at MACFO's base in Mamelodi.
11. A year-end session at Kwena Phola Park outside Soshanguve in December 2022 to mark the end of the residency in the Department of Cultural Policy and Management in the Wits School of Arts.

Alongside the events, members of the Collective have participated in several online and in-person presentations at academic conferences in South Africa and internationally:

12. Featured case for the ICTM Online Dialogues on decolonising music and dance studies (Feb. 2021) and the subsequent digital publication (2022).
13. For the 14th Austrian Chapter of the ICTM meeting, invited to present on a panel titled "Sustainable Solutions for Participatory Research in Ethnomusicology" (Nov. 2021).
14. Panel discussion on Mamelodi as a site of resistance for the African Critical Inquiry Program's Workshop titled "1985!" (Apr. 2022).
15. Sound praxis exchange closing colloquium with Brazilian visitors (Apr. 2022).
16. Jazz as Heritage panel at the UJ Weekend of Jazz (Sep. 2022).
17. The panel at the ARA2022 conference reported on here (Sep. 2022).

Notes

1 Amidst the student protests that brought many South African universities, including Wits, to a halt in 2015 and 2016, the view was often expressed that we had moved beyond the mainstream consensus that the country had put its apartheid past behind it. In this sense, we were moving beyond the "postapartheid" into a new, ongoing period of reckoning with South Africa's racialised past.

2 In this context, transmodality refers to the ways in which vernacular jazz culture goes beyond music to include practices of collecting, DJing, forms of social association, sartorial display and dance.

3 The Anyaa Arts Kollektif emerged out of the work of Accra-based musician, sound sculptor, author, educator, and community arts library activist, Nii Noi Nortey. His collaborations with other Ghanaian musicians and the anthropologist of sound Steven Feld are documented on a series of DVDs and CDs on the Voxlox label and in the book *Jazz Cosmopolitanism in Accra* by Steven Feld (2012). For more about the Anyaa recordings, see recordings and films at https://voxlox.myshopify.com.

4 Feld engages extensively with this broader literature on cosmopolitanism in his monograph. For a more recent, relevant elaboration of pertinent theoretical debates, see Paulo Lemos Horta's *Cosmopolitanisms* (2017).

5 For the moment, we recognise but bracket the consideration that by Christopher Small's account, listening and dancing are equally interesting manifestations of musicking (1998).

6 For more about the Anyaa recordings, see recordings and films at https://voxlox.myshopify.com.

7 These pieces were "Build Dreams" by Chantal Willie-Petersen, "Ballad for Nana Chakela" by Prince Lengoasa, "Wars of Perception" by Andre Petersen, "Marvellous" arranged by Kgomotso Moshugi, "Music" by Sathima Benjamin (music and vocal arrangements by Chantal Willie-Petersen) and "Ndizakuxhela Kwamajole" by Winston Mankunku Ngozi.

8 This band comprised a bass, lead guitar, drums, keyboards and Cindi on various wind instruments in the lead and on vocals.

9 A full chapter "A Musical History through Vocal Expressions at the Abbey Cindi Cosmology Concert" is presented as part of the ARA2022 Conference Proceedings.

10 The iconic Cape Town International Jazz festival that had been scheduled for 2023 was postponed till further notice.

TRANSATLANTIC AFRICAN SOUND PRAXIS: COMMUNITARIAN PRACTICES, PEDAGOGIES AND RESEARCH

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This paper summarizes the exploration of sound praxis, a decolonial approach in South African universities inspired by the work of Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire. The paper discusses the history and development of sound praxis, focusing on articles and research by Samuel Araújo and the Ethnomusicology Laboratory of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. The concept of sound praxis integrates dialogue, participation, and collective authorship in research, challenging traditional academic norms. The abstract also highlights the collaboration between Brazilian and South African activists, educators, and researchers, as they seek to apply sound praxis in their respective contexts and explore the potential for transformative pedagogy and artistic practice.

Introduction

Among the reference points from which student and staff activism has taken its coordinates over the past half-decade in the ongoing quest for decolonial options in South African universities, the by-now classic critical social pedagogies and research paradigms associated with the Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire (1921-1997) have received renewed attention (if unevenly). Within music studies, transformative work in the Freirean tradition has been reported on for at least the past two decades, across the South Atlantic, in the work of Samuel Araújo and students and colleagues associated with the Ethnomusicology Laboratory of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). In particular, a generative notion of "sound praxis" has been developed, initially in collaboration with the Grupo Musicultura, a musical collective and action-research group founded by residents from Maré, Rio's second largest *favela* (slum), which adopts a participatory strategy based on Freire's notion of dialogic education and research.

In April 2022, several young activist-educator-researchers from three collectives from Rio de Janeiro associated with the Ethnomusicology Lab at UFRJ, the Research Group Dona Ivone Lara (GPEDIL), the African Diaspora Musicalities Research Group (GPEMUDA), and Cultural Resistance (*Resistência Cultural*), visited Johannesburg and surrounds to share experiences, approaches and methodologies with like-minded local colleagues, students and community activists. Two of the participants, Felipe de Sousa Carneiro (aka Nyl MC) and Andre dos Santos Junior (aka Pirigo DJ), are musicians who currently work professionally in the Brazilian rap and hip-hop scene, while another, Lucas Assis da Costa (aka Sukita), straddles performing rap with his studies as an instrumentalist advancing the *samba* and *choro* traditions. The other Brazilian participants are currently music and art teachers who focus on the relationships among music, education and research: Pedro Mendonça, Caroline Lima Souza de Lucena, Juliana Freire (Potiguara), and Renan Ribeiro Moutinho (short profiles of these participants appear in the appendix). They in turn interacted with postgraduate students and colleagues in the Wits School of Arts, several of whom are postgraduate students, colleagues and research associates working with Associate Professor Brett Pyper, and community-oriented music societies, schools and research collectives from around Gauteng province. This collaboratively authored paper summarises the notion of sound praxis and considers its relevance as a decolonial approach in the South(ern) African context, informed by the initial encounters of April 2022, and as the basis for an ongoing partnership that collaboratively explores how practice-based research can simultaneously transform and advance pedagogy and artistic practice in (South) Africa and Brazil.

Sound praxis revisited

Though developed in a Lusophone context, there is by now quite an extensive literature in English in which the consolidation of the notion of sound praxis can be traced. For brevity's sake, we focus on two early articles and a book chapter published between 2006 and 2010, which emerged from research activity that had taken place since at least 2004.[1] It is thus opportune to reflect on close to 20 years of this way of working in the Brazilian context, even as we explore its relevance to Southern African conditions today.

The first article, authored by Samuel Araújo and members of the Grupo Musicultura (2006), appeared in *Ethnomusicology*, the journal of the US-based Society for Ethnomusicology. Widely regarded as a, if not *the*, leading platform for scholarly exchange in its field, especially in North America, its content tends to serve as a global benchmark. It was thus significant that Araújo departed from the strong trend to-

wards publishing solo-authored articles in this field and co-produced this text with over twenty co-authors, something rarely seen in the humanities and social sciences by comparison with other disciplines.

The article begins by considering "non-hegemonic traditions" of music scholarship with reference to individual Brazilian scholars "largely unknown to ethnomusicologists around the world," several of whom worked as composers and in the public sphere (Araújo et al. 2006, 287). Mention is also made of institutions that have played an important role in the consolidation of what is now called ethnomusicology in Brazil, not least of which is the UFRJ, which emerges as a point of reference across multiple macropolitical shifts in Brazilian history and society since as early as 1846.[2]

It is against this background that the authors focus, rather, on a then-emerging type of scholarship that opened "an unprecedented dialogue" with "the people we work with" as researchers. In the terms of the authors, this approach brings with it "entirely new issues and directions" that centre on "moving the field [of ethnomusicology] to consider *the sharing of its time and investment* in seemingly prosaic but, in fact, intellectually challenging and politically explosive directions" (Araújo et al. 2006, 289, emphasis added). Most of these "prosaic" issues relate to the day-to-day struggles of socioeconomically marginalised communities, notably those of Indigenous and African descent, in Rio's *favela*s.

Much of the 2006 article is devoted to a theoretical reflection on the relative lack of attention to conflict and violence in ethnomusicology to date, and an assertion of its centrality to understanding the conditions framing and informing musical practice in the subaltern urban contexts with which the authors are concerned. While that aspect of the article also invites comparison with the contemporary Southern African situation, as does another major theme regarding the validity of the distinction between applied and scientific research, here we focus on what the authors of the article characterise as the "new forms of relations between communities and the researchers they study." These forms enable "the opening of a possibility of a new kind of knowledge about social forms such as music" (Araújo et al. 2006, 291). Though not yet described in terms of the Freirean elaboration of praxis, but rather as "dialogic ethnographies of sound practices," the article invokes Freire's concept of dialogic research as a key point of reference, laying the groundwork for a more explicit naming and theorising in subsequent publications.

That position is fully articulated in a solo-authored article by Araújo (2008), emerging from his participation in the first meeting of what became the International Council for Traditional Music's (ICTM) Applied Ethnomusicology Study Group. Declaring a decisive move from scientific "neutrality" to an explicitly ethnomusicological "praxis," Araújo positions the new approach anticipated in the 2006 article against the established ('traditional,' 'classical') "modes" of "face to face" research. These characterisations are worth quoting at some length, beginning with what he calls the "modern" and later the "colonial "approach to ethnography:

> The researcher in this case is usually an individual tied in some way to an academic institution, equipped with academically oriented theories, methods and research categories. He or she defines 1) research focuses and goals, as well as 2) the nature of the data to be "collected," after a period of "immersion" in "another" cultural reference system, 3) "collects" the necessary data, with, to some extent, native collaboration, 4) "translates" the data (i.e., through comparisons with his/her own cultural referents), something which is eventually done with native help, and, finally 5) interpret[s] these data in the [most coherent possible] manner, generating a textual form to be published under the researcher's exclusive authorship. (Araújo 2008, 14–15)

Araújo then compares the approach described above with the kind of texts associated with the critical, reflexive turn taken by anthropology since the late 1980s and in ethnomusicology since the 1990s, which he later characterises as "post-colonial":

> Contrastingly, one might place a reflexive mode (or "post-modern" if you may) in which the researcher is still an individual who 1) defines his/her initial focuses and goals, but all the other subsequent steps will present differences to some degree in comparison with the previous outline. He/she will 2) define and redefine the nature of the data to be collected through a persistent dialogue, negotiation and approximation with his/her "chosen society," 3) "collect" and "translate" data with systematic native help, and finally 4) interpret them with native collaboration (collaborative editing) aimed at a publication still to be authored by the researcher his or herself, despite the fact that native voices are granted greater credit and growing complexity as compared to conventional ethnographies, as well as a relative space to diverge from or even to contradict the credited author. (Araújo 2008, 15)

Setting itself off against both of the above approaches, in what may be taken to be the key argument of the article, Araújo posits "a third and progressively expanding mode" of "intensely participatory" musical ethnography (presumably de- or counter-colonial), in which:

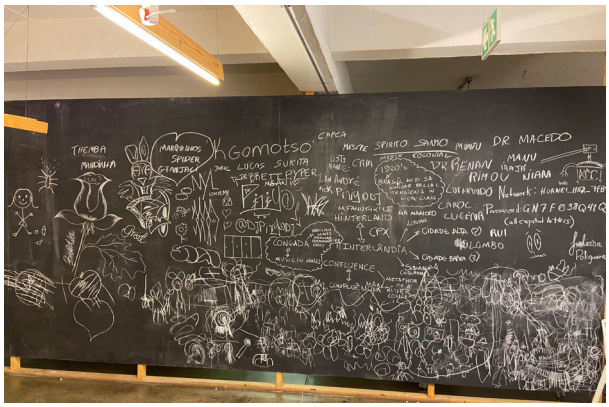
> both native and academic researchers…negotiate from the start the research focuses and goals, as well as 2) the nature of the data to be gathered, 3) the type of reflection they require, highlighting community demands which may be potentially met with the research results, in which 4) natives will both gather and interpret the data, resulting in diffusion through collective authorship in various academic and non-academic contexts[.] 5) [N]on-academic natives and academics of different social origins develop reflections on the dialoguing process that permeates the research, and finally 6) new focuses arisen in this reflection open new research interests and suggest new forms of diffusion beyond the conventional ones. (Araújo 2008, 15)

The third article that explicates the essential features of sound praxis as developed at and in association with the UFRJ was again co-authored (or at least co-signed – see below) by Samuel Araújo with Musicultura (2010). Elaborating on their earlier analysis of the relationships among music, politics and violence in Brazil, they offer a definition of sound praxis in their work, arguing for:

> a simultaneously political and epistemological approach, integrating horizontal modes of knowledge production, individual or collective action, and public policy making and implementation revolving around sound praxis, conceptualized as:
>
> "*Articulation between verbal and non-verbal discourses, actions and policies concerning sound*, presenting themselves, oftentimes in subtle or imperceptible ways, in the daily life of individuals (amateur or professional musicians, non-musicians, cultural agents, entrepreneurs, legislators), collectives (collectives of musicians, fans, professionally related social positions) and institutions (enterprises, unions, governmental agencies or NGOs, community councils, schools)." (Araújo and Grupo Musicultura 2010, 219–220, emphasis added)

In short, sound praxis draws on Freirean educational philosophy, itself embedded in traditions of Marxian critical theory, especially Antonio Gramsci's theorisation of praxis, to posit new, "horizontal" (non-hierarchical) relationships among ethnographers, the communities traditionally "researched" and the spheres of social and political action. As Araújo puts it in his most recent publication on this topic,

this both grounds and problematises: "a new ethnomusicological praxis based on the assumption that we openly engage with our interlocutors' existential and political struggles, while highlighting the potentials of and challenges to notions of dialogue and participation in the course of such initiatives" (Araújo 2021, 71).



This understanding of sound praxis challenges several enduring normative features of academic life around the globe, not least of which is the individual expertise ascribed to researchers, who historically are assumed to be removed from the communities they write about, and who are relatively passive in relation to the research enterprise. This is moreover tied to predominantly textual forms of solo authorship that are expected to be the key outcomes of the research. Araújo and his co-authors are trenchant in critiquing these norms in their call for "not allowing stable theorizations in the course of part-time interactions aimed at individual authorships in search of academic authority" (2008, 28).

The approach summarised above evidently envisages a new form of collective, activist research that goes beyond conventional scholarly protocols and even more deliberate attempts at sustained collaboration with communities beyond academia. The norm of research being practised within the frame of a "self-reproductive" scholarly practice (Araújo and Grupo Musicultura 2006, 290) can here be understood in a double sense, referring both to how particular disciplines reproduce themselves and to how these "modes" produce and maintain individual academic authorships and careers. It is this individualising, inherently appropriative inclination that the authors are probably referring to when they describe "a world largely shaped by commodity forms, some of which materialized in the authority of certain academic discourses" (Araújo 2008, 14).

On Communitarianism

Many considerations arise from the summary given above, but we are compelled to be selective in a paper of this scope. Since the intention of our emerging collaboration is to practise sound praxis approaches in our respective contexts and compare experiences, it is still relatively early to present "outcomes." What we focus on here is the way in which thinking about research as a more collective, participatory and "horizontal" process led us, during the initial encounters of April 2022, to gravitate towards a term that our Brazilian participants often used, "communitarian." This became significant enough for us to use it in the title of our closing colloquium.

Working across language boundaries, at a basic level, this came across as a direct translation out of Portuguese of the adjectival form of the noun "community," with "communitarian" being used as an alternative adjectival form to "communal." However, since Araújo himself had used the term in his 2008 article (14), as our interactions developed, and the South African participants came to adopt the term, it led Professor Pyper to inquire directly of Professor Araújo as to the significance of the term in Brazil. That exchange is quoted here to document and advance our study group's engagement with the concept:

> BP: Your use of the term "communitarian" (on p.14) is one that I've noticed is used extensively by Pedro and the other researchers who visited us in Johannesburg. So much so that it's become a keyword for our ongoing collaboration…This term makes perfect sense in English, though it seems like a literal translation of a Portuguese word. I'd be interested to know whether you intend it that way, in which

> case I'd appreciate knowing the source word and its connotations in Portuguese. Or, does "communitarian" refer to any specific philosophy or theorization, such as the communitarianist tradition of political philosophy?"
>
> SA: *Comunidade* (adj., *comunitária*) is how a certain trend of post-1988 Constitution public administration documents started to name the working-class residential areas historically known as *favela*s (slums). Even though *comunidade* became a term of widespread use among residents and this terminological change was accompanied by a number of partial reforms to mitigate the hardships of being largely underserved by state policies and considered as some sort of security problem and social disease for a century, *favela* is still the term preferred by a number of local political militants as a way of signalling little has changed after 1988. Then I use communitarian on the basis of what is of common use derived simultaneously from a "sanitizing," state-induced terminology and a certain fact-based self-perception that everyday life is actually lived through a communitarian praxis.

It emerges from this discussion, then, that the term "communitarian" in the recent Brazilian history recounted by Araújo prioritises the experiences and predicaments of people living in *favela*s. The politics of naming sites of subaltern, mostly black, residence in Rio invites comparison with the shifting use of the term "township" in South Africa, with comparable sensitivity to the sociohistorical overtones of its use.

Conclusion

The sound praxis exchange initiated in 2022 was remarkable for the ease with which its mostly young or early-career researchers from Brazil and South Africa established a rapport and a commitment to advancing their collaboration. Ongoing online meetings of the study group have already led to joint conference presentations (like the present one) and plans to pursue regular study group sessions, joint research on "race" relations and the arts, and when funding permits, physical exchanges between students and academics from our institutions, co-authorship and publication of articles and books, and translation of articles of shared interest from Portuguese to English and vice-versa. In the future, we envisage joint teaching and exploring joint postgraduate courses. More immediately, we are also keen to pursue audiovisual co-productions between artists and researchers and counter-(contra) colonial education material. Much doubtless remains to be learnt about the affordances and limitations of a sound praxis approach in our respective contexts, which we look forward to reporting on at future conferences.

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Notes

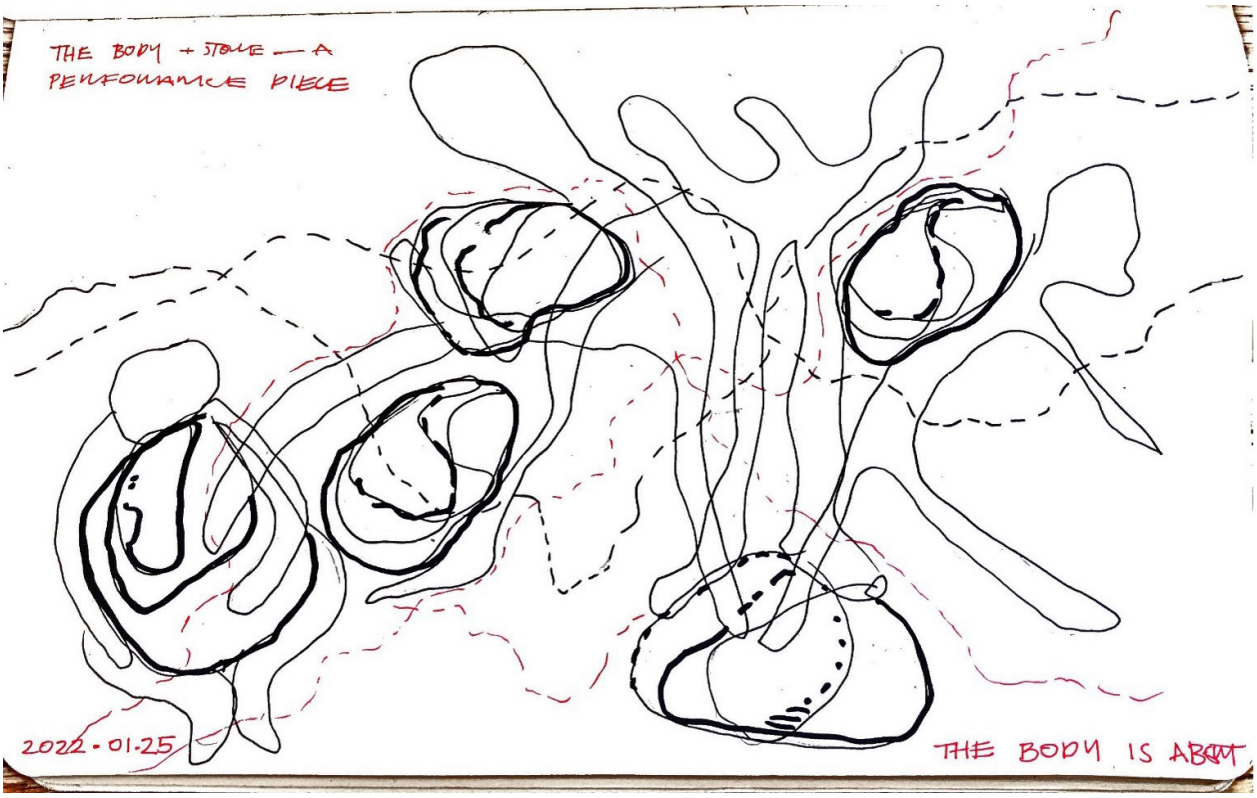
1 Subsequent publications that are highly relevant to this discussion and merit further reading include Araújo and Cambria (2013), Cambria, Fonseca & Guazina (2016), Araújo (2019) and Araújo (2021).

2 A comparative account of the provenance of African music studies in Southern Africa, in the work of individuals as well as institutions, will be pursued as the Sound Praxis Exchange study group continues its dialogues.

THE BODY MATTERS: MAKING THE BODY AND MATERIALS PRESENT IN POST-EXTRACTIVE URBAN TERRAINS IN RESPONSE TO ISSUES OF THE ANTHROPOCENE THROUGH SPECULATIVE AND PERFORMATIVE PRACTICES

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This paper explores the relationship between human actions, particularly in the context of extractive industries and colonial attitudes, and their impact on climate change. The text discusses the concept of the Anthropocene and its problematic implications, emphasizing the need to reframe the relationship between humans and the living world. It proposes embodied creative practices that engage with materials and the body to challenge extractive narratives and foster a more holistic understanding of matter and its agency. The paper highlights the importance of individual responsibility and collective action, drawing attention to the role of implicated subjects in addressing the material consequences of our actions.



BM 1. Sketches of the proposed performance, thoughts on bodily relations

You Are the Weather

As I sit in my office in Johannesburg in late October of 2022, I hear the rumble of thunder, hoping and anticipating the now six-weeks-overdue spring rain. I am reminded of the evocatively titled call to climate action by Johnathan Safran Foer, *We Are the Weather* (Foer 2019). Foer attempts to reveal to the layperson the relationship between ordinary everyday actions and the long-term effect that these actions will have on climate change. Such actions are as mundane as what we eat for breakfast, where and how we choose to live, and what we throw away, the everyday material that makes up modern life. The relationship between the global systemic shifts caused by this material and the material itself is arguably one of the most difficult for humans to comprehend. This is largely because of the immense time scale involved in the carbon cycle, whose deposits we squander with alarming rapidity within the short temporal range of living memory. We need only remember that two of the most destructive chemical inventions of the twentieth century, Tetraethyllead (leaded petrol) and chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), were one person's invention (Larsen 2021). Such an example may make it easier to understand how we are inclined to act with planet-altering consequences without regard for the living world or life-sustaining planetary systems.

Over the past few years, the concept of the Anthropocene has come to characterise our understanding of the planet-altering effects of human actions on global climate. The term was first coined by Paul Crutzen in 2002 (Zalasiewicz et al. 2008, 4), and although only partly accepted by the stratigraphic community (Crutzen 2002; Steffen et al. 2007; Zalasiewicz et al. 2008, 2011, 2015), has since entered into common use outside the field. The term is not unproblematic, however: Kathryn Yusoff has raised the issue of the Anthropocene and the complicity of white colonial attitudes in her book *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (Yusoff 2018). Here she suggests that the term implies that all humans are

equally to blame, while in reality the Anthropocene has primarily been scripted by Western (and, increasingly, Eastern) neo-colonial extractions and consumption, at the ongoing expense of black bodies enlisted in these processes. Within cities forged by extractive industries such as mining, like Johannesburg, black and brown bodies now find themselves disproportionally exposed to the harmful chemical aftermath of weathering, as industrial wastelands and mine tailings erode and fracture. We need urgently to address the material consequences in the here-and-now of past actions taken. The term Anthropocene, Yussof argues, promotes a 'White Geology … that creates atemporal materiality dislocated from place and time – a mythology of disassociation in the formation of matter independent of its languages of description and the historical constitution of its social relations' (Yusoff 2018, 16). In short, the planetary notions inherent in the term Anthropocene enable us to think and act within terrains without understanding their complexity or evincing concern for the consequences of our actions on humans and other forms of life. This serves to extend colonial attitudes that treat the earth as inert, resulting in erasure, extraction, and inevitable despoliation. Such attitudes can arguably be traced back to the nature/culture binary within Enlightenment philosophy.[1] In the South African colonial project, material inertness and the concept of empty land were pressed into political service, principally for the acquisition of land and mineral wealth at the expense of the black bodies who mined and worked the land. Yussof describes the black Anthropocene as the wilfully constructed subjectivity that pressed black and brown bodies into intimacy with the inhuman (Yusoff 2018, 11). The Anthropocene thus cannot be separated from a colonial, material understanding of matter as inert and black and brown bodies as inhuman. This implies that if we are to address the issue at the heart of the human-altered plant and its long-term geological implications, we will need to reframe the relationship between humans and the world around us. Thinking of the world as living, I suggest we must begin by rethinking ourselves as part of, rather than separate from, the living world. Yet we must do so in ways that acknowledge in imbalance in human blame and the consequences of Western material attitudes.

Much of the work of the decolonial project has centred upon the retrieval of the African body. Sylvia Wynter, for instance, suggests that being human is a praxis – a process of becoming with. Human beings, she reminds us, are 'magical, bios and logos, word made flesh, muscle and bone animated by hope and desire' (qtd. in McKittrick 2015, 16). In making this connection, she draws an implicit relationship between the body and the earthly materials of which it consists, suggesting the geological connections between the body and the stuff of the world. In doing so, she references the phenomenological theory of acts, as proposed by Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Simone Debouve, among others, which seeks to explain the mundane way in which social agents constitute social reality through language and gesture. If we enact social constructs through mundane acts, could we reframe these constructs through mindful bodily acts? Could thinking about the body, as a thinking entity, in and of itself, become a tool for thinking of inert matter as comprising vital and agentic entities outside of the human? While simultaneously acknowledging the labouring body, can we think of the body itself as thinking matter?

Implicated Subjects

When considered in the light of colonialism, the anthropocentric view of climate change raises questions of implication, blame, and responsibility. In her discussion on collective responsibility, Hannah Arendt suggests that when it



BM 2. Becoming Compostist

comes to the issue of action and responsibility, it is vital to remember that responsibility is individual rather than collective; the collective cannot be held accountable for individual actions (Arendt 2005). Only individuals can assume the responsibility to act, whereas collective guilt, or empathy, tends to lead to inaction: 'everyone's problem becomes no one's problem.' Arendt argues that '[t]here is such a thing as responsibility for things one has not done' (Arendt 2005, 187). In the present context – although a few big offenders are more directly to blame for climate-altering omissions – this means that, as citizens of the early 21st century, we should all take responsibility, even if we are not to blame. Michael Rothberg's term 'implicated subjects' is helpful here. Implicated subjects, Rothberg argues, occupy positions aligned with power and privilege without being themselves direct agents of harm; they contribute to, inhabit, inherit, or benefit from regimes of domination but do not originate or control such regimes (Rothberg 2019, 1). We inherit implication, whether or not we are responsible for the original activity; moreover, we enact inherited material narratives of colonial attitudes through our everyday actions, even if we were the victims of those narratives. In sum, individual and societal implications are profoundly entangled and should be collectively addressed in a creative, practical response to questions arising from the anthropocentric material narratives we have inherited.

How can this be achieved in the arts? We are not scientists capable of creating the hoped-for scientific breakthroughs that may rescue us from the crisis and enable us to emerge like a phoenix from the ashes. Nor are we in possession of the political power and will required to enforce the necessary changes to halt carbon emissions. Suppose we understand that the everyday material acts of both the many and the few have brought us here. We can then understand that everyday material acts also have the potential to alter the trajectory of climate change. I propose a counter-narrative of terrain specificity as a counterbalance to the easy abstractions of materials and bodies associated with the term Anthropocene. The Anthropocene enacts historically constituted deformations that join human and inhuman earth into relations for extractive actions (Yusoff 2018, 11). Both black and brown bodies and physical matter are erased within the colonial attitudes of the Anthropocene. This situation can be addressed through creative practice aimed at recouping erased material narratives. The relationships among the active body, the vital materials from which terrains are constructed, and the planetary movements of extracted matter, are difficult to conceptualise but should be part of any discussion of the Anthropocene in a postcolonial context.

In her writing on the Posthuman, Donna Haraway suggests that redressing extractive attitudes within the Anthropocene requires us to 'make kin' within the non-human world. We should become *compostists*, rather than posthumanists, who think about and act within materials in 'tentacular' ways (Haraway 2016, 101). In creative practice, this requires us to learn and think about materials through direct bodily encounters with vital materials in living terrains. Feminist posthumanism promotes an understanding of bodies and 'other matter' as one, indistinguishable from one another and thus interconnected with one another through a quantum understanding that directly challenges Newtonian physics on which our material frameworks are predicated. In this view all matter is considered to be intelligent and self-organising (Braidotti and Hlavajova 2018, 308).

As a material practice, composting is a process of learning to think with, become with, and make with the posthuman other of urban terrains. To take Haraway's proposition forward in ways that redress inhuman others in the Anthropocene requires us to develop imaginative ways of participating in the living world,

turning to modes of practice that acknowledge what is at stake and acknowledge blame. We should be seeking out imaginative ways of bringing the issue of extractive attitudes towards matter into one conversation with all the human bodies who inhabit urban terrains, that is, in ways that make humans, organisms and the environment co-present (Haraway 2016, 31). In the following practices, I present stone, body and terrain as my creative language by making present extractive matter. I aim to contest the extractive and colonial material thinking in the Anthropocene by re-imagining the stony matter of the urban terrain as vital and living. The human body becomes an active co-labourer in shaping the urban terrain by thinking beyond matters of extraction to imagine stony matter as a vibrant social actant.



BM 3. Moving and acting with matter weaves life words

Weaving Lifeworlds

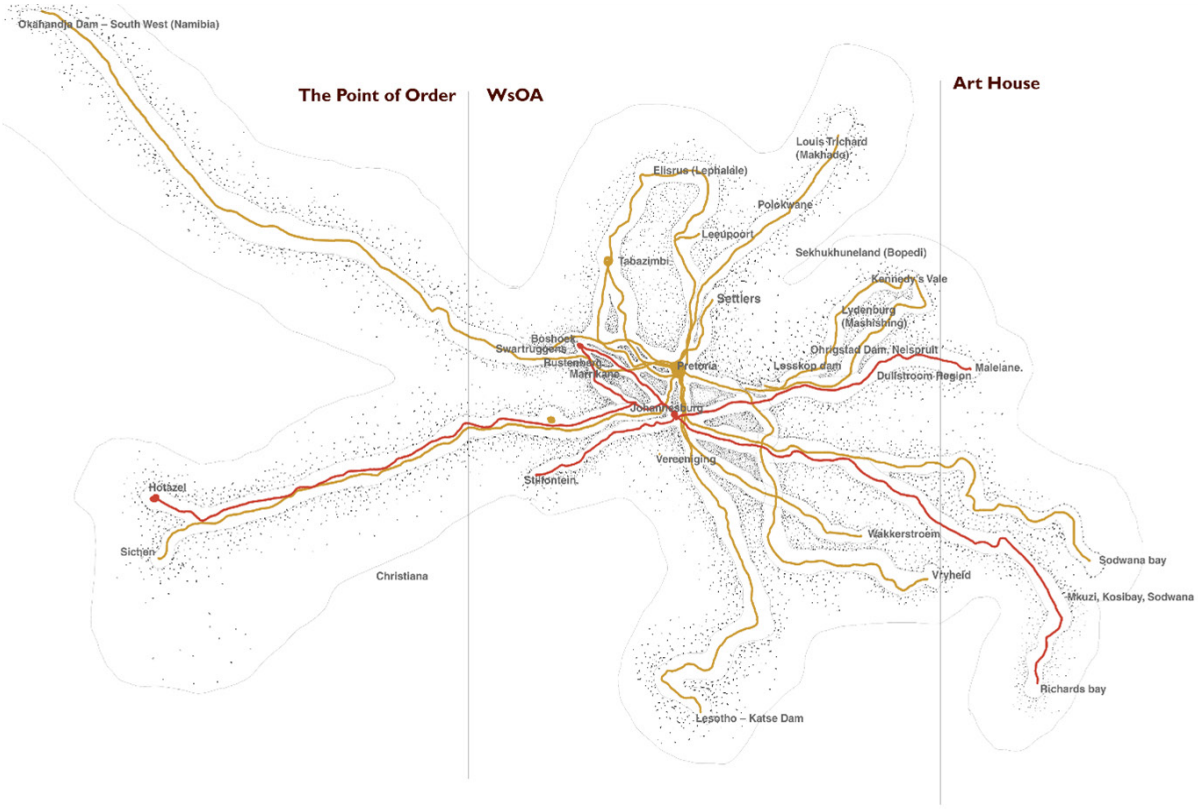
We have the oldest, richest and simplest tool at our disposal for making matter and terrain present in the body that we use to move through the medium of the living world. In my creative approach, I pursue unstructured body-centred practices of coming to know matter as vital actants in world-making; for instance, to consider stone as a vibrant material within the urban terrain formation, after Jane Bennet's proposition that all matter is vibrant and actant and endowed with 'thing power' (Bennett 2010, 2–3).

The anthropologist Tim Ingold describes the body-centred way of coming to know materials as akin to weaving and growing. In body-centred practices, materials traverse the body in the process of becoming. Ingold suggests that we learn about the materials from which we make things by engaging directly with those materials through the sensory body that moves through the medium of earth and air, in, on and along the ground (Ingold 2010, 121–22). We are thus repeatedly reminded that material knowledge is created through bodily experience, with materials, in a weathering world. Ingold examines the work of crafting, making and designing through the lens of art, architecture, anthropology and archaeology (Ingold 2013). He emphasises that making a thing from raw materials is coming to know through a haptic encounter, be it through weaving, designing a house, making a hand axe, or forming a mound. He suggests that when we make things, the maker and material are in conversation through gesture. Physical acts of making incorporate the whole body and forge an entangled understanding of materials and agencies which together produce the final emergent form.

Marcel Mauss describes actions that generate material knowledge as 'bodily habitus' (Mauss 1973, 73). He highlights techniques that enable us to negotiate materiality as a medium: bodily techniques such as walking, climbing, tramping, stomping, tiptoeing, sloshing and swimming are techniques to navigate the complexity of land and water. Other general techniques such as pulling, pushing, throwing, and holding are joined by techniques of the hand for discovering things about the world and its material qualities – touching, rubbing, and squashing.

To materialise extractive narratives, we may present such actions and habits of the body in installation and performance. Here, a multiscalar approach is required to address the global and the specific, making present global material narratives through speculative practices and material installation while also making the body and the immediate terrain present in performative actions of making. In the next section, I explore two moments of material encounter

and installation that attempt to narrate the relationship between particular and global extractive actions. In the first, I explore how to make global extractive actions materially present (see Figure BM 4). In the second, I explore the specific performatively through the act of piling and stacking stones (see Figure BM 1).



BM 4. Mapping of the movements of my grandfather over the South African landscape in the course of his work in mineral prospecting

Part 1: Materialising White Geology in Recent South African Material History through an Exploration of Implication in Family Histories

A short while ago, I produced a collaborative work with the artist Chloe Shain, in which we attempted to make present the often erased materiality of extraction and the related movement of white bodies across the terrain of South Africa from the 1940s to the early 1980s. We set about this by tracing and mapping the movements of our respective grandfathers, hers a mining engineer, and mine, a driller who worked for mineral prospecting and mining companies throughout his adult life (see Figures BM 4,5). The map is drawn from the study of personal family archives, my extensive photographic archive, and a map of places visited, dates and what was being sought at the time.

The installation aimed to make present the actions and consequences of the Anthropocene. My grandfather died in 1981, a year before I came into the world. I am clearly not responsible for his actions. However, as an architect working daily with building materials, one cannot help but feel the weight of these actions. If the body does not remember, the terrain certainly does, through the cutting and scarification of the earth from mining and water developments and the cumulative choices, movements, and marks we make as we go. I find that to address the questions of materiality in the Anthropocene, one must think 'tentacularly,' with multi-species interrelations, making at-

tachments and detachments, weaving and knotting relations among matter, extractions, time and weatherings (Haraway 2016, 31). Through this installation, we were speculating on the interrelationship between extractions, the built form and the weathering urban terrain. The traces of the everyday actions and decisions of you and I will remain long after we have departed.

The installation was placed over a series of fragmented sites (Figure BM 6) constructed of stones gathered from extraction sites, and placed in configurations to mimic our spatial mapping of movements (Figure BM 4). Each constellation of stones bore a place name and was connected to a tag with the name of the mineral extracted (Figures BM 7 and BM 8).

Within the installed map and meshwork, we trace movements across the Southern African hinterland using strings which connect places in map-like configurations. We connect the stone from each place with the extractions that occurred there over the years. The interconnections between extractive actions, landscape dispossession and ownership, and movements across a landscape become visible within the work through the stones gathered from sites of extraction and the strings that tangle and mark the movements and connections between places. This manifests within the work's physicality the entangled implications of the legacy we inherit. We see that whether or not we are directly implicated in past actions, we are implicated as heirs of the colonial legacy of extraction. That which is hidden or voided in extractive actions becomes visible in the traces of historiographic and archival knowledge contained in personal narrative and family history. It is important to note that in the case of my grandfather, extraction includes both minerals and water and records material relationships among access to land, mineral and water during the anthropocentric acceleration of the Anthropocene in the South African context from the 1950s to the 1980s.



BM 5. Explorative mapping of the proposed installation over three sites across the Wits School of the Arts precinct

As I have done with every installation work throughout my research practice, the recent installation involved shifting stones, collected over vast distances, in this case over several years, into the space for the installation. In this activity, the body traces its movements, and the stones leave traces on the body; dust settles in the lungs and nose, and cuts, bruises, and abrasions result from the handling of stones, entangling specific physical action with global consequences.

Part 2: Making the Body and Material Present through Material Encounters

In the second part of the work, I explore the second scale through a bodily encounter with stony material in the construction of a cairn (stone pile) made from stone extracted from the central Witwatersrand ridgeline (Figure BM 15)(watch the film here: https://vimeo.com/763335238). This work takes place as an embodied exploration of making the stone present through creative practice, shifting and touching the stone in a recorded performance of making. The work is set in a specific context in which the material and the body interact, with the late afternoon, winter sun, a gentle breeze and the sound of the highway all forming part of the performance (Figure BM 8). The body moves within the terrain in the act of making and interacting with the stone.

The performance begins with encountering the stones' physicality, as one selects and picks up each stone and works with its form and surface texture in stacking and forming the cairn. As one builds the cairn, stones are shifted and turned to create the form (Figure BM 9). The exploration of the stone's qualities thus blends into the construction of the cairn, the body moving backwards and forwards to the pile as the cairn grows. Each stone is weighed, felt and shifted or turned over, then settled into place in the temporary aggregation of the cairn. To form the cairn, each stone must work with those below and above; through the hand, the body must feel out the final form through the process of making and the act of aggregation. Through this interaction, the stone and the body work together to create the work's final form. In much the same way, through every specific act of making and unmaking, the city's terrain shifts and changes over time. The process is depicted in Figures 11–14, below.



BM 6. Connecting mapping and extractions

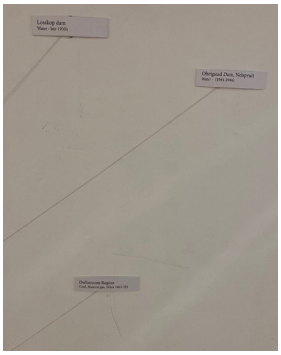
Reflections

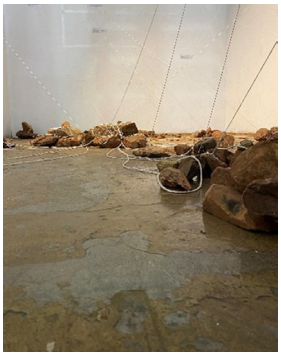
Within these installations, we witness two modes of making present the materiality of terrains; in the first, we trace the Anthropocene through implied action, materialising that which is often erased and making present the terrain-altering and climate-change implication of the action. Through bodies that move across terrains with the intention of extracting and through familial relations, we trace the implication of societal changes and decisions. We reveal the tracings of decisions made regarding fossil fuel extraction for electricity generation and make present a thousand decisions pertaining to consumption extending back across time and terrain. We make visible the terrains that enable our society to function and make connections between waste, decay, excess and the material extractions which they necessitate. As time is collapsed in the process of mapping, we begin to understand our implication as those who have inherited the actions of the past.









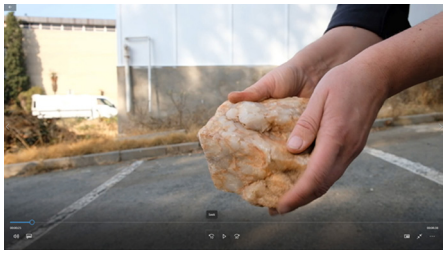


BM 7. Central mapping of extractive histories – WSoA 2022.

In the second work, what is made present is the effect of bodily habits, the unconscious actions of our bodies, and our contribution through these to terrain and climate change. The turn towards stone shows how bodily care for the environment can equally inform the form and process of making and weathering on this human-altered planet. We become beings present in the body alongside the other-than-human world to direct our large-scale material actions. We need to fold time, extraction and action into one moment as we ask ourselves, what is our place in the world?

By bringing the body, movement and materials into the conversation, the acts of extraction evoked resonate globally as they relate to individuals who lived, worked and moved within the landscape. While meaning is made through personal connection to the story, at the same time the material attitude towards the land is laid bare. Acts of care, being and becoming with are absent in the first work, but through the foregrounding of touch are introduced in the second. This reminds us that we, like those that came before us, act individually, moving and shifting matter, but that our actions today have future consequences. We can and should take responsibility for things we have not done, but also for the future consequences of what we are doing. As you view the work, I ask you to reflect upon your bodily habitus and how you, as creative practitioners, are implicated in the Anthropocene through material framing and thinking and the everyday habits that inform larger impacts. What implications have you inherited, and what are the material implications of your actions?

















BM 8. Context of performance

BM 9. Encounter with the stony matter, through touch, rough and smooth, weights and form, all combine in making the cairn.

BM 10. Creating base

BM 11. Fitting, forming and shuffling

BM 12. Inserting a capping stone

BM 13. Finishing the body in the cairn form

BM 14. The final form and 3D scan of the cairn

BM 15. Unmaking the cairn

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Notes

1 The nature/culture binary which emerged in Enlightenment philosophy, and a Newtonian understanding of matter as inert and humans as separate from the living world; this extended into a philosophical understanding of terrains as inert surfaces for human action and extraction within spatial thinking.

THE ANOTHER ROADMAP AFRICA CLUSTER (ARAC) UN/CHRONO/LOGICAL TIMELINE OF HISTORIES OF ARTS EDUCATION: FROM THE WITS SCHOOL OF EDUCATION TO DOCUMENTA 15, KASSEL, GERMANY

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This paper explores the development and evolution of the un/chrono/logical timeline of histories of arts education initiated by the Another Roadmap Africa Cluster (ARAC) Histories of Arts Education Research Project. The timeline, consisting of multiple iterations, challenges the traditional notions of history and engages with personal narratives, language, and multimodal elements. The research project aims to map and understand the diverse models of arts education, emphasising local perspectives and resistance to imported models. Drawing inspiration from the Medu Art Ensemble, the research framework employs intergenerational collaboration, dialogue, decentralisation, and a focus on language and ideology. The paper highlights the significance of the timeline in reimagining and practicing arts education.

Introduction

I begin this paper with an extract from a text prepared by Puleng Plessie, a fellow researcher in the Another Roadmap Africa Cluster (Johannesburg Working Group) for the Fridskul, Documenta 15, in Kassel, Germany (18 June to 25 September 2022).

> The timeline aims to place Histories of Arts Education, including the routing of personal narratives, firstly, from an African context and abroad. As the Johannesburg Working Group (JWG) we often struggle with the term History. In IsiZulu there is no HIStory, no masculine, or feminine but rather *Umlando*, a word used to define a stem of a plant or a story. This stem-story represents time, the beginning or essence of the story. This timeline, in its un/chrono/logical nature, speaks to *Umlando* beyond the written, but the imagined, vocal, sonic and visual. Each iteration has different interactions calling for a response and in some instances, observation and intergenerational engagement.

Retrospectively, from 2022 it seems appropriate to emphasise the unchronological, almost agitated quality of the timeline that is the focus of this paper. Plessie's text cites some of the key features of the un/chrono/logical timeline that have evolved since its inception: the inviting of personal narratives from multiple sites; the problematising of the term, HIStory; the introducing of words from languages (e.g. *Umlando* from IsiZulu) to challenge assumed meanings and understandings; the multimodal qualities invoked and evoked, and the intergenerational dialogues generated. The list below, also from Plessie's text, charts the existence of the un/chrono/logical timeline of the histories of arts education as an ongoing series of iterations:

1. **Wits School of Education:** Engagement from the Another Roadmap Africa Cluster (ARAC) and staff and students from the Witwatersrand School of Education (WSOE) (April 2017).
2. **The Point of Order:** Engagement from ARAC with third-year fine art students from WSOA, (April 2017).
3. **Wits School of Arts (WSOA):** Learners from New Model Private College place adhesive tape on the timeline as a means of preserving the text (May 2017).
4. **Arts and Culture Trust University of Johannesburg Conference:** David Andrew activates the timeline in the forecourt area adjacent to the conference venue. Delegates and participants observed and contributed to the timeline (July 2017).
5. **University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg AMIC Dec:** The Johannesburg Working Group (JWG) in collaboration with students from the University of the Witwatersrand and Metropolitan College worked on the timeline with the introduction of sonic elements and poetry (September 2017).
6. **Koni Benson and the JWG at the WSOA:** Discussion focused on possible extensions to the un/chrono/logical timeline and engagement with similar timeline research (October 2017).
7. **Alone time:** Rangoato Hlasane has one-on-one time with the timeline. Puleng Plessie also has alone time with the timeline (2017).
8. **Intertwining Hi/stories Festival, Vienna, Austria:** This iteration included performative engagements with the timeline with Rangoato Hlasane reading letters from Fees Must Fall activists and poetic interventions from audience members (2018).
9. **Ba re e ne re Literature Festival, Maseru, Lesotho:** ARAC and Intertwining Histories members, artists, poets and audiences continued to work on and with the un/chrono/logical timeline at the festival (2018).

10. **Lephephe Print Gatherings 3 Festival:** The festival included a writing workshop with Lineo Segoete and Puleng Plessie (Keleketla! Library, Johannesburg) (2018).
11. **Rorke's Drift, Histories and Pedagogies – Stories told and yet not told Symposium** at the Bag Factory in Johannesburg, South Africa (5–6 April 2019). David Andrew convened this symposium with participants interacting with and contributing to the timeline.
12. **Wits School of Arts:** The JWG activated the un/chrono/logical timeline in the parking area in front of the WSOA building as part of Africa Month celebrations with sonic experiments by third-year students, Riley Grant and Adrian Fortuin (May 2019).
13. **Javett Art Centre, University of Pretoria:** Digital documentation of the un/chrono/logical timeline by Lerato Kuzwayo (2020).
14. **Documenta 15, Fridskul, Kassel, Germany** – The second version of the un/chrono/logical histories of arts education timeline is initiated (June-September 2022).



The first iteration of the Another Roadmap Africa Cluster Un/chrono/logical Timeline of the Histories of Arts Education with The Visual Century timeline photocopied pages, Wits School of Education, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa (6 April 2017)

The Another Roadmap Africa Cluster (ARAC) Histories of Arts Education Research Project

Located in the wider Another Roadmap School project conceived of as a critique of and supplement to the UNESCO Roadmap for Arts Education (2006) and the subsequent Seoul Agenda (2010), the Another Road Map Africa Cluster research group has been involved in a project for the last seven years that considers how ideas about arts education are imported, how they travel and how and why they are accommodated and mutate. In April 2017 at a public event at the Wits School of Education, as part of an Another Roadmap Africa Cluster symposium, a thirty-metre long un/chrono/logical timeline of histories of arts education was initiated. This has been an ongoing project and has now seen its fourteenth iteration. Following on from Plessie's earlier framing statement of the un/chrono/logical timeline for Documenta 15, the research located in and around the un/chrono/logical timeline seeks to identify what might be termed "local" models of "arts education." The intention has been physically to map, in as detailed a fashion as possible, all these models, to try and understand the evolving of arts education as a surface of jostling, overlapping, superimposed, receding, and dominating moments and processes. These have existed with varying degrees of proximity, in their contestatory, contradictory and, at times, complementary states. In doing this, the ARAC Johannesburg Working Group has sought to establish a series of counter and complementary narratives to those regarded as central to an understanding of "arts education" in southern Africa. As much as the "mapping" seeks to identify models, it includes moments, events, individuals and collectives to reveal legacies critical to an understanding of how "arts education" might be re-imagined and practised. Key points of resistance to imported and migrated models are critical to the research project.

The Medu Art Ensemble

In drawing on these points of resistance, the Johannesburg Working Group has developed a generative research framework inspired by the working methodologies of the Medu Art Ensemble. These methodologies are in turn rooted in the work done by Rangoato Hlasane and his co-director, Malose Malahlela, as part of

the Keleketla! Library collective project and also Hlasane's teaching at the Wits School of Arts. The following points give some idea of these methodologies:

- Intergenerationality of research teams, debates, information gathering and decisions. This extends to the collective, ensemble-like methodologies present for the research;
- Dialogues/talks/conversations and re-enactment sessions;
- Decentralisation of learning sites;
- The potential for a "festival" format that authorises itself, has broader appeal and crosses disciplines;
- The centrality of grappling with language and ideology.

The Medu Art Ensemble was a group of cultural workers from townships in South Africa. In 1978 they went into exile in Gaborone, Botswana, in defiance of the increasingly oppressive apartheid regime. Here they established the cultural organisation named Medu Art Ensemble (Medu is a SePedi word meaning roots), with units specialising in a range of disciplines across the visual and performing arts and writing. The Medu Art Ensemble based their work on the following principles and questions:

- Education as a tool for building society and culture;
- They asked: how can we create an education system which will enable us to build a better society?
- Communities working together, collectively; who hear each other and speak to each other; who challenge existing realities and create new ones;
- An education that teaches to question and to change the world around us;
- Learners actively testing boundaries;
- A focus on the ongoing intertwining of practice-theory-practice. (Seidman 2010, 239–254)

The Un/Chrono/Logical Timeline of Histories of Arts Education: April 2017

The initial entries for the timeline were taken from the publication *Visual Century: South African Art in Context 1907–2007* (2011), a project overseen and edited by Mario Pissarra, founder and director of the Africa South Art Initiative (ASAI). The publication spans four volumes addressing different epochs in the period 1907–2007. Timelines are included in the volumes as a way of contextualising South African art history in relation to South African history, world art history and world history. In a recent informal conversation, Pissarra commented on the contestations involved in arriving at entries for the timeline, what was included, and what was part of the conversation but in the end excluded. Such contestations, although absent from what was eventually published, are important to thinking through what an un/chrono/logical history of arts education timeline might entail.

In their linearity and implicit injunctions towards progress, timelines are often associated with Western conceptions of time. Here I acknowledge Koni Benson, Thuli Gamedze, Tamsyn Stewart (Stewart 2018) and others who have worked with timelines in different contexts in local spaces, such as with Ruth Sacks in the University of Johannesburg History of Art department, whose second-year course invites students to grapple with the notion of timelines in ways that deepen understandings of time and history.

On 6 April 2017 the ARAC group worked on the first iteration of the un/chrono/logical timeline, engaging histories of arts education from the vantage points of participants from the Cairo, Harare, Johannesburg, Kampala, Kinshasa, Lubumbashi, Maseru, and Nyanza research groups. This first iteration took place at the Wits School of Education, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, as part of an ARAC Symposium. Students and colleagues from the Wits School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, were invited to participate.

I don't recall how the decision to use the *Visual Century* timeline was arrived at – perhaps it was my idea to have something in place, on the timeline, that offered a point of departure or something to respond to. The imaginations brought to the initial, exploratory un/chrono/logical timeline of histories of arts education were diverse and varied, in keeping with the purpose of the exercise. Certainly, its quality as a durational process that was pedagogical, research-based and located in a collective creative and intellectual endeavour was not mapped out explicitly in advance.

During the day, the timeline accrued many entries, some pre-planned, some spontaneous, some in response to others, and some intensely personal. Some stayed within the broader chronologies introduced by the *Visual Century* outline. At the same time, it became clear that, in the spirit and urgency of the injunction to think un/chrono/logically, the timeline would be driven by instincts that were unruly, disobedient and filled with large doses of healthy scepticism. George Shire, the Zimbabwean academic and writer, who was present for the public event at the Wits School of Education, suggested that conventional timelines registered "the bad side of history," suggesting that what we were doing was a "remix" of the *Visual Century* timeline. The use of sonic language and the sonic accompaniment to forthcoming iterations of the un/chrono/logical timeline have made this a salient feature of the project up to the present (see further comment later in the paper). Central to the working method adopted for the un/chrono/logical timeline was the ambition to move in ways contrary to the traditional ordering of time and space shared by the ARAC working groups. During the subsequent days of the ARAC symposium, the timeline was also activated at The Point of Order project space and Keleketla! Library.



The Un/chrono/logical Timeline of the Histories of Arts Education, Wits School of Education, Johannesburg, South Africa (6 April 2017)

The Un/Chrono/Logical Timeline of Histories of Arts Education: Beyond April 2017

Between April 2017 and the present, the un/chrono/logical timeline of histories of arts education accumulated a tactile density as hundreds of people contributed to its creation. These contributions range from hand-written entries, either prepared or written in the moment, photocopies, to original and found material. Apart from noting its colossal thirty-metre-long presence, it is important to consider what is happening on its surface in a more detailed way and assess the import of this often "coherent chaos" (Achari 2021).

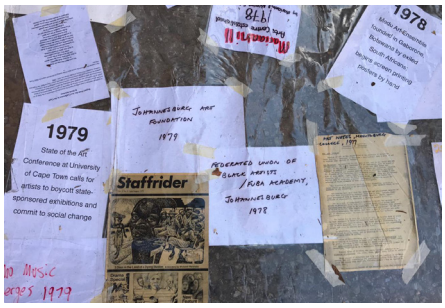
The project of a metre-by-metre exposition of the un/chrono/logical timeline is still to be undertaken. For the purposes of this paper, I focus on two small areas of the surface. The first includes contributions that introduce the following: a reference to the *State of the Art* Conference held at the University of Cape Town in 1979; an acknowledgement of the Johannesburg Art Foundation being founded in the same year; a copy of an issue of the *Staffrider* cultural magazine; a reference to the Marianhill Art Centre being established in 1978 by the Marianhill Mission School; a reference to the establishment of the Federated Union of Black Artists (FUBA); a reference to the Medu Art Ensemble's founding in Gaborone, Botswana, in 1978, and a copy of South African white secondary school Art subject notes from 1979 with the title *Practical Art Activities* and the sub-title *The Art Problem*.

The second area brings together the cover of the *John Coltrane: Africa + India* tribute album from 1985; a reference to South African short story writer, Can Themba; a reference to the University of Durban-Westville; an entry noting the Cairo-based office of the African Liberation Movements from 1960–1975, and the name of one of the JWG collaborators, Tracy Murinik, and a year date.



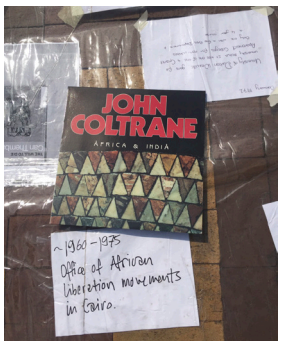
The Un/chrono/logical Timeline of the Histories of Arts Education, AMIC Deck, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa (September 2017)

Some of these entries are seemingly immediate factual presences, others provide textual expansion. There is no guiding system present beyond the possible presence of the *Visual Century* timeline. Over the different iterations, these entries or fragments have been accumulating, becoming more layered, and some earlier fragments have been partially or completely obscured. So, for instance, it is quite possible that none of the *Visual Century* photocopies are visible in the current iteration. What the viewer-participant encounters is a multiplicity of juxtapositions, superimpositions, and inversions, some of which invite ready connection, while others tend to jolt and jar. The un/chrono/logical timeline has generated a pedagogical vibrancy that reverberates. It does not illustrate this vibrancy so much as embody it, as bodily movements being a repetitive technique (Spatz 2017) ignite an emotional and creative temperature (Bagchi 2021). It suggests an entirely different conception of how histories might be generated and recuperated. The depth of this iterative performance is as significant as the surface itself.



Detail from the Un/chrono/logical Timeline of the Histories of Arts Education (May 2019)

The un/chrono/logical timeline thus operates on multiple levels. First, it is a collective effort to bring together the experiences, memories and desires of arts education, some from a so-called formal context, some from so-called informal contexts, others from deeply personal histories, and yet others simply from a desire to be included in these histories. It is in this confounding, often perplexing, profusion and material-textual agitation that striking juxtapositions warranting further deliberation are to be found (e.g. the proximity of the Medu Art Ensemble initiated *Culture and Resistance* conference of 1982 in Gaborone and the *State of the Art* conference hosted by the University of Cape Town in 1979). Secondly, as noted above, its constitutive presence galvanises an actant quality in the encounter between imported models of arts education and those that have emerged in more localised spaces. The constitutive presence of the un/chrono/logical timeline also allows for a series of delinking actions (Gaztambide-Fernández 2014).



Detail from the Un/chrono/logical Timeline of the Histories of Arts Education (September 2017)

The ARAC Johannesburg Working group reiterates how the themes and aims of the Another Roadmap School international cluster project, Intertwining HIStories, has resonated with their research processes over the last six years. These are understood as modes of inhabiting histories, history as a resource, disturbing hegemonic narratives of history and animating and activating counter-hegemonic narratives. The map/timeline conflation does several things: it deconstructs the idea of progress; it disrupts the idea of a calendar/rhythm; it articulates questions of social justice, and visualises the passage of time differently.

What is the significance of the un/chrono/logical timeline as an object of sorts, a durational process, a pedagogical presence and an example of artistic research?

During the January 2020 ARAC Symposium, convened in several different venues in and around Johannesburg (including The Point of Order project space), Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández, a member of the Another Roadmap School and Professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, gave a keynote address focused on his controversial paper published in the 2013 *Harvard Educational Review* special edition on arts education, titled *Why the Arts Don't Do Anything: Toward a New Vision for Cultural Production in Education*. The fact that there is ongoing dialogue between Gaztambide-Fernández and the ARAC research group suggests that it is the alternative rhetoric of cultural production that he foregrounds in the article that the un/chrono/logical timeline demands and manifests.

The un/chrono/logical timeline, in its layered juxtapositions, its spilling over and into, its excess, its unruliness and refusal to adhere to linearity, invites the expanded vision of symbolic creativity. This, in turn, demands a reorientation and recalibration as we engage the extended premises of the relational, the collective, and still-to-be-imagined practices that we accommodate in the pedagogies and artistic research of the arts school and beyond.



Detail from the Un/chrono/logical Timeline of the Histories of Arts Education (September 2017)

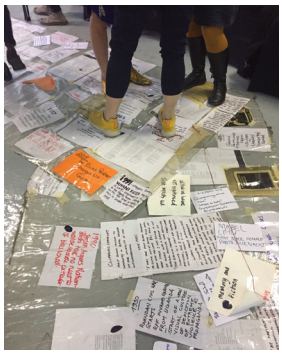
The second version of the un/chrono/logical timeline was initiated at Documenta 15, Kassel, by the ARAC research group. There is something emergent about the documentation of the initial stages of the second version, even tentative – but perhaps this was present in April 2017, too. The hundreds of participants who have contributed to both versions of the timeline have been helped to situate individual and collective practices in broader histories and thereby accessed possibilities for expanded notions of symbolic creativity and how they manifest in our pedagogical and research imaginations. Given the extraordinary tensions, "hostility, racism and censorship" (Lumbung Community Letter, September 2022) experienced by many of the artists at Documenta 15, perhaps the un/chrono/logical timeline offers something of the space of critical openness and inclusivity imagined by the Lumbung group.

But what of the un/chrono/logical timeline itself, as a material, physical presence? Recently I read a post on the ArtPedagogy Instagram site referencing Hew Locke's installation (this descriptor does no justice to the work) titled The Procession at Tate Britain (ArtPedagogy 2022). The writer wrote the following of Locke's work: "I wish it could parade through every school as a marching, marauding, disruptive curriculum. The whole timetable could be trampled over. Art, textiles, craft, design, drama, history, politics, sociology, geography … it's all there." This, in turn, reminded me of the writing by Cameron McCarthy and the late Greg Dimitriadis on the carnivalesque as a pedagogical galvanisation:

> Postcolonial artists, however, give us no such easy referents. They evoke complex polyglot worlds of negotiation that cannot be easily contained. These words of negotiation are best captured, we argue, in the concept of the 'carnivalesque,' or the unpredictable patterns of association, inversions of hierarchies of powers, and the playful, uncontrollable, rhizomatic, flourishing of multiplicity that has taken over the modern city and metropolis. (2004)

There is something about this curriculum that marches, marauds and disrupts, that tramples the timetable (and other structural impediments), that reminds me of the un/chrono/logical timeline and its presence as an irregular constant across times and space. The timeline is path-like or even road-like in its thirty-metre extent. It has been walked on, talked upon, it has been seen and has seen, it has listened to myriad conversations and sounds, it has occupied spaces and confounded time. In its layered complexity and profusion, it asserts the multiplicity, contradictions and collectivity that timelines deny in their attempts to order. Yes, more conventional timelines serve a purpose, but the un/chrono/logical timeline of histories of arts education has evolved into a counterpoint to the palatable, exclusionary decision-making that governs timelines and, in so doing, affords us an affective experience of what lies between, in addition to, and beyond the entries expected in a timeline. This experience is consonant with histories from the ground up and a more communal, intergenerational mode of practice. At the same time, the affective qualities seemingly wrench a participant or viewer into a more intimate form of knowledge and understanding that, as RAQS Media Collective member Jeebesh Baghchi observes, "changes the emotional temperature in your body" (2021).

Not a Conclusion



The Un/chrono/logical Timeline of the Histories of Arts Education at The Bag Factory, Fordsburg, Johannesburg (May 2019)

Timelines have been mobilised as signifiers of a linear progression of history for narrative understandings located in Western notions of time. Elsewhere in the conference proceedings, I have drawn on the work on time published in the *Parse Journal*. Descriptions of time as "reversible, intermittent, episodic, various and variable, pluriform, relative, relational, and, importantly, finite" (Beech et al. 2016, 8) are equally apt for the un/chrono/logical timeline of histories of arts education. The recognition that artists "have the advantage of shuffling, overcoming, undermining, fictionalising time" (Beech et al. 2016, 11) is also germane to the import of the un/chrono/logical timeline. "Shuffling" and "reversible" immediately connect with the work of Hlasane, a member of the Another Roadmap Africa Cluster JWG and director of the Keleketla!Library collective. As an artist, DJ, lecturer and scholar, he understands sonic modes as primary in his own practice and cultural production (Gaztambide-Fernández 2014). In turn, his references to the un/chrono/logical timeline are often located in the language of the DJ. He describes his associations with the surfaces and totality of the un/chronological timeline as being about remixing, playing, pausing, rewinding, splicing, cutting, stretching, breaking and so on. It is no coincidence that the iterations of the un/chrono/logical timeline have been accompanied by sonic interventions such as, for example, Abdullah Ibrahim's *Mannenberg*. To encounter the un/chrono/logical timeline is also to confront a giant score of sorts that is playing and waiting for improvisations from its participants and interlocutors. The celebratory qualities of the carnivalesque recognised by McCarthy and Dimitriadis are not dissimilar from those witnessed in relation to the un/chrono/logical timeline. Indeed, one of the itinerant rituals conducted during many of the iterations of the un/chrono/logical timeline is the "People Who Think Together Dance Together" practice, where the surface of the timeline becomes akin to a dance floor.



Detail of the Un/chrono/logical Timeline of the Histories of Arts Education at Keleketla!Library, Johannesburg (February 2020)

As much as I am interested in the carnivalesque possibilities of the timeline, the iterations that involve more contemplative, intimate engagements should not be ignored. The un/chrono/logical form of the timeline, is an example of the proximities and confrontations brought to artistic research by practitioners and publics from the Global South and Majority World. Is the un/chrono/logical timeline of histories of arts education an example of artistic research? At its inception it was never intended to be this, strictly speaking. Nevertheless, as asserted in the stem-story and temporal presences invoked by Plessie earlier in this paper, it has evolved as an example of collective and cumulative making over seven years that warrants consideration for exactly this and more. Rather than offering a conclusion here, I extend an invitation to readers collectively to engage with the generative possibilities of further iterations and versions of the un/chrono/logical timeline of histories of arts education.

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DEVELOPING A HEALING ARTS PEDAGOGY AND PRACTICES (HAPPY) TRAINING: AN ARTS-BASED CURRICULUM FOR TRAUMA STABILISATION AND STRESS ALLEVIATION IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

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This paper discusses the theoretical foundations and pedagogical principles underlying the "Mas'phefumle" project, which explores healing arts practices and pedagogy as a response to trauma in South Africa. The authors propose that artistic research has transformed and advanced arts-based pedagogies in the country, offering impactful healing practices that can help communities during challenging times and regulate individuals after traumatic incidents. The curriculum developed, called Healing Arts Pedagogy and Practices (HAPPy), aims to establish culturally sensitive activities that promote resilience and create safe learning environments. The foundations of the curriculum are based on healing, the arts, pedagogies, and practices, integrating elements of polyvagal theory, psychotraumatology, and the African philosophy of Ubuntu. The paper describes the action research method used and presents the initial cycle of the curriculum's development.

1.0 Introduction

We are at war for hope, my friend
– Puno Selesho

At the ARA2022 International Conference on Artistic Research in Africa, held at the University of the Witwatersrand, De Beer and Draper-Clarke presented "*Mas'phefumle: Breathing Together through Trauma using Healing Arts Practices and Pedagogy*." During an experiential and participatory presentation, they invited delegates to experiment with practices designed to activate, balance and calm the human nervous system. This paper focuses on the theoretical foundation and pedagogical principles that underlie this work and offers an answer to the question of how artistic research has transformed and advanced arts-based pedagogies in South Africa.

We propose that the arts offer impactful healing practices that have been used to resource communities, particularly during challenging times, and to regulate community members after traumatic incidents. Healing here is defined as "a holistic, transformative process of repair and recovery in mind, body, and spirit resulting in positive change, finding meaning, and movement towards self-realization of wholeness, regardless of the presence or absence of disease" (Firth et al. 2015, 49).

Given the high levels of trauma, stress, and anxiety within South Africa's educational institutions, made more visible since the Covid-19 pandemic, we developed a curriculum using an action research method. The Healing Arts Pedagogy and Practices (HAPPy) teacher development curriculum came into being as an innovative response to the current educational and mental health crises within South Africa. It was developed by Welma de Beer, and supported by Manola-Gayatri Kumarswamy and Lucy Draper-Clarke.

Our research leveraged the intersection between the expressive arts, education, and mental health to develop and test a training model to support the *stabilisation and regulation* of trauma and *build resilience* for students in *safe educational settings*. This is in line with indigenous psychologies (Bojuwoye and Moletsane-Kekae 2018), since communities successfully use cultural practices, rituals, and spiritual ceremonies to restore mind, body and feelings after trauma (Malchiodi 2021).

The interdisciplinary training curriculum aims to establish equitable, accessible, culturally sensitive activities that are simple, safe, fun and practised in a community. It brings movement, music, rhythm, play, stories and moments of silence (back) into schools in a natural way that helps learners slow down, learn better, become more resilient and support each other. The curriculum makes use of neuroscientific research to select those rhythms, movements, story elements, sounds and other arts practices that offer the highest potential for stabilising and creating healthy and safe learning environments.

2.0 Theoretical Framework

The HAPPy curriculum was developed at the intersection of Western neuroscience and the African relational philosophy of Ubuntu. From neuroscience we reference polyvagal theory and psychotraumatology (used in Emergency Pedagogy), and from the philosophy of Ubuntu, we emphasise a communal approach to healing (Makanya 2014).

2.1 Polyvagal Theory

Research in the field of neuroscience has revealed the debilitating effects of trauma, which impacts the ability to think, feel, act, and socialise. Porges' polyvagal

theory (2011) describes the evolutionary development of the autonomic nervous system, distinguishing a hierarchy of trauma responses: 1) freeze response, where we become hopeless, overwhelmed, and unable to respond to a perceived threat; 2) fight or flight response, where there is still a sense of agency, and 3) social engagement, which is an optimal state of presence. Enabling social engagement is the key to trauma stabilisation. Using polyvagal theory, Malchiodi (2015) and Dana (2018) describe artistic and somatic practices that can support emotional regulation, provide stability and improve interpersonal relationships in situations of trauma. Once we are regulated, our awareness, concentration and focus, and ability to relate to ourselves and others with kindness, compassion and acceptance, also improve, thus allowing us to co-regulate. Van der Kolk states that "imprints from the past can be transformed by having physical experiences that directly contradict the helplessness, rage…" (2014, 4).

2.2 Psychotraumatology and the Emergency Pedagogy Organisation

Emergency Pedagogy (EP) is an international volunteer organisation using a pedagogical approach "for the stabilisation and supporting of traumatised children and adolescents" (Kühn 2009, 26) and founded on the theory of psychotraumatology (Fischer & Riedesser 2003; Ruf 2015) and neuroscience. The organisation has led numerous crisis interventions since 2006, believing its approach to be "a necessary prerequisite, accompaniment, and supplement to appropriate therapeutic processes" (Kühn 2009, 26).

Their pedagogy focuses on psychic and social stabilisation and mastery of the dysfunctional after-effects of trauma (Ruf 2015). It offers distinct ways of working with children during the stress reaction phase (Ruf 2013). Using circle practices that incorporate verse, singing and eurythmy (Mendus 2016), trauma-affected children are brought back into social engagement. This enables feeling, expressing experiences through creative forms, establishing social competencies, encouraging play, including body awareness and the senses, stimulating movement and encouraging relaxation.

2.3 Ubuntu: African Relational Philosophy

The African philosophy of ubuntu views the nature of being as relational, with a distinct focus on community (Eze 2008). "It is not, 'I think therefore I am'. It says rather, 'I am human because I belong. I participate, I share'" (Tutu 1999, 31). Le Roux asserts that "interdependence, communalism, sensitivity towards others and caring for others are all aspects of ubuntu as a philosophy of life" (Venter 2004, 149). Within this worldview, rituals and arts-based practices provide healing for individuals within communities where illness is viewed as a fractured connection between the self and the collective (Makanya 2014; Ginwright 2018).

3.0 Method

An extensive literature review was conducted, exploring the intersection between the creative and expressive arts and contemplative and cultural practices for addressing mental health challenges within the education system in South Africa. We then used the literature review to inform the first stage of the action research cycle.

The action research method is frequently used in the field of education (Stringer 2008) to develop new curricula to meet the needs of communities. Action research adopts "a methodical, iterative approach embracing problem identification, action planning, implementation, evaluation, and reflection. The insights gained from the initial cycle feed into planning of the second cycle, for which the action plan is mod-

ified, and the research process repeated" (Riding et al. 1993, 2). Zuber-Skerritt (1992) has described the distinctive features of the higher education curriculum development process as (a) critical collaborative enquiry by (b) reflective practitioners who are (c) accountable for making the results of their enquiry public, (d) self-evaluative in their practice, and engaged in (e) participative problem-solving and continuing professional development. Through action research in higher education, theories are developed and the results made public in order to create knowledge.

Action research (AR) makes visible the cyclical process of blending theory and practice, or praxis, as it is described in Freire's pedagogical approach (Mayo 2020). This ensures that theory is embodied and enacted. During Drama for Life's (DFL) Covid-19 intervention, aspects of the HAPPy place curriculum were critically evaluated through repeated cycles of implementation, both online and in person, with university students, teachers, interns, and teachers-in-training. De Beer's PhD study contextualised these findings for the pervasive situation of stress, anxiety, and trauma in South African schools. For the purposes of this paper, we narrow our focus to the theory, pedagogy and practices that have been utilised to design the HAPPy teacher development curriculum, implemented by trained interns, who assumed the role of teacher assistants in schools.

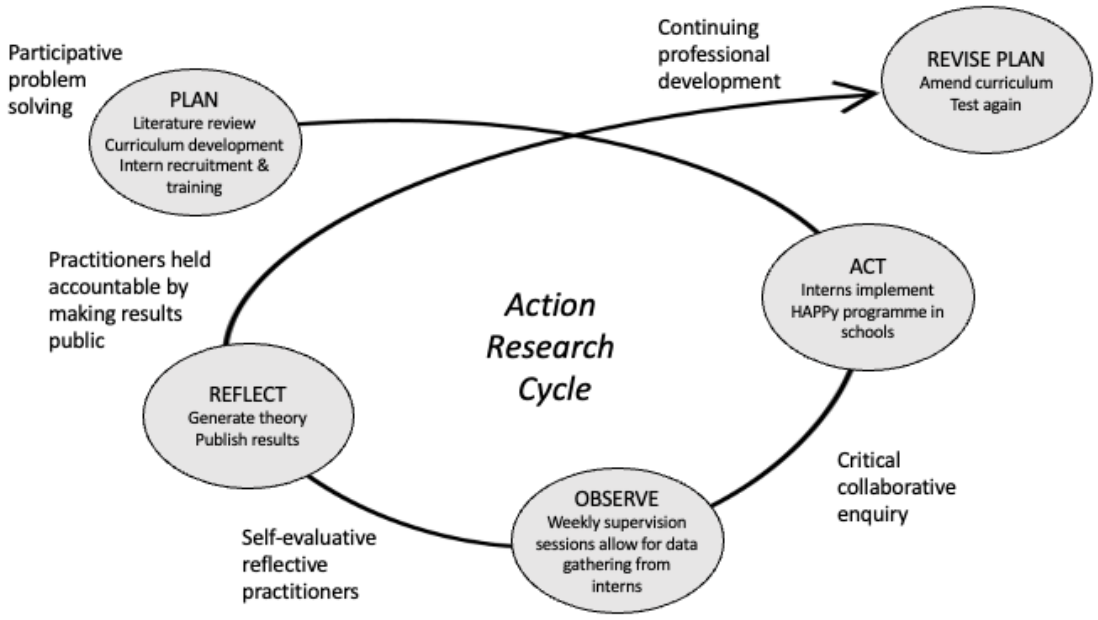


Fig 1. Action Research Cycle

This paper documents the initial cycle of the AR method, focusing on the theoretical foundations that bridge Western and African practices. We also describe drama-therapeutic principles that inform the use of distancing methods to prevent re-traumatisation, such as story, metaphor, and symbol. Other practices, drawn from the mindfulness, breathwork and embodiment fields, serve either to activate or calm the human nervous system, depending on the type of trauma response. Subsequent papers will document later cycles of the AR method.

4.0 The Four Foundations of the HAPPy curriculum

The HAPPy curriculum for teacher development has been established on four foundations, namely **H**ealing, the **A**rts, **P**edagogies and **P**ractices. These are outlined below:

4.1 Healing the Past for a Healthy Present

High rates of violence and trauma exposure necessitate this holistic healing approach. "After apartheid, high levels of often criminal interpersonal violence continued, fuelled by rapid urbanisation and ongoing socioeconomic disparities, that resulted in a high level of trauma exposure" (Atwoli et al. 2013). Published statistics illustrate the crisis:

- 99% of children living in Soweto, Johannesburg, had been exposed to violence in their own home, schools and community by the age of 24 (Richter et al. 2018).
- high levels of perpetration of violence, by children themselves (43% of children and 90% of adolescents), indicate a cycle of abuse and violence (Richter et al. 2018).
- gender-based violence in SA is also among the highest in the world (African Health Organisation 2021).

Socio-economic disparities contribute to South Africa's trauma burden. South Africa is one of the most unequal countries in the world and due to the enduring legacy of apartheid, poverty remains concentrated in previously disadvantaged areas (Hurlbut 2018). Poverty, emotional, physical or sexual abuse, and household dysfunction and neglect, are prime indicators of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE). The ground-breaking ACE study of Felitti et al. (1998) found that high ACE scores correlate with higher workplace absenteeism, financial problems, lower lifetime income as well as mental disorders and physical illness, high suicidality, addictive behaviour, substance dependence, abuse, high-risk behaviours and violent relationships (Ruf 2013; Van der Kolk 2014). There is clearly a need to address adverse childhood experiences as they occur, to prevent these negative outcomes in adulthood.

Unaddressed trauma also leads to addiction and substance abuse (Ruf 2013; Van der Kolk 2014), causing a maladaptive loop. In South African schools, Burton and Leoschut (2013) found that:

- 47% of learners smoked marijuana at school,
- 31% witnessed learners who were high,
- 27% knew learners who were drunk at school.

Advances in neuroscience have given us a better understanding of how trauma changes brain development, self-regulation, and the capacity to stay focused and in tune with others (Van der Kolk 2014). This might account for the low educational outcomes experienced in South African schools:

- 27% of pupils who have attended school for six years cannot read, compared with 4% in Tanzania and 19% in Zimbabwe (*Economist* 2017).
- About 50% drop out before completing secondary education; about 25% fail the end-of-high-school examinations; and less than 5% of students end up with a university qualification (Mlachila and Moeletsi 2019).

Without some knowledge of trauma and the tools to support traumatised children, teaching is likely to be ineffectual. The HAPPy teacher development curriculum therefore helps teachers to *stabilise* and *regulate* the stress responses of trauma in South African schools, to build agency and *resilience*, and create *safety* through collaborative and communal artistic engagements.

4.2 Arts-Based Approaches

The HAPPy training positions the arts as bridging learning and well-being, education and therapy. It brings back healing arts practices into the school curricu-

lum, helping us slow down, learn better, become more resilient and support each other, while inviting systemic change. Malchiodi (2020) posits eight key reasons why arts-based practices are effective in trauma interventions: they create sensory experiences; soothe mind and body; enhance non-verbal communication; recover self-efficacy; re-script the trauma story; help imagine new means; restore our sense of aliveness; and anchor awareness through embodiment.

We know that the experiences of children are shaped both inside and outside of schools, and the pandemic created environments that prevented positive learning experiences. The situation today requires the inclusion of trauma-informed practices in the formal and informal curriculum. Artistic and performative practices serve in two ways: attuning classes and building group cohesion before teaching curriculum subjects, and regulating, stabilising, and balancing the effects of trauma throughout the school community to create 'Safe Schools.'

4.2.1 Expressive Arts

Arts-based approaches have tended to refer to a singular artistic modality. However, expressive arts-based approaches embrace and integrate all the modalities (art, dance, music and drama) including techniques such as storytelling and story making, poetry and creative writing. These practices illuminate the understanding of human experience and create a space of investigation where complexity, contradiction and confounding outcomes are validated and welcomed (Malchiodi 2020).

Expressive art is based on four indigenous healing elements, namely, movement, sound, storytelling and silence (Malchiodi 2021; Roth 2011). In Malchiodi's work, participants are encouraged to find culturally appropriate, indigenous modes of performance to facilitate dialogue, teach and heal trauma.

4.2.2 Drama therapy

Drama therapy (DT) has been extremely successful in addressing psychological trauma and injuries in children and adolescents (Jennings 2019; Jones 2007). According to Lahad (2014), DT is firmly established in PTSD treatment because it enables a dialogue between body, mind and emotions while using the imagination. Also relevant for developing the HAPPy curriculum, is that DT can be applied to different cultures (Jones 2007).

Through embodied practices, this therapeutic approach creates self-awareness, builds empathy, offers healthy distancing, activates the imagination, improves cognitive functioning, provides alternative expression, and builds critical reflection by reorganising material (Jennings 2019; Jones 2007; Van der Kolk 2014). Through a gentle, collective and 'ritualised' approach (Jones 2007) it is possible to create community and long-term peer support systems (Kingwill and Palmer 2018), and re-establish rhythm, breath and movement (Jennings 2019).

4.3 Pedagogical Approaches

Three trauma-informed pedagogical approaches were applied in the curriculum development process to ensure experiential and communal learning. As these work most effectively within an environment of trust, cultivating safety is a key pedagogical imperative for preventing secondary trauma or re-traumatisation.

4.3.1 Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of Hope

Freire's pedagogical focus emphasises the importance of curiosity, critical thinking and ultimately, hope for learning. This educational philosophy underlies the HAPPy curriculum's intention of creating safer learning environments based on democratic

principles (Freire 2021). The approach makes use of circular co-learning spaces, where all members are visible to each other, equal and included. These 'culture circles' are mutual, collaborative and explorative, designed to create experiential learning opportunities (Ecclestone and Hayes 2019). Unlike classroom situations where learners sit behind each other and are vulnerable to activities happening 'behind their back,' the circle creates safety, inclusion, and a sense of belonging. This is essential when trying to establish safe learning spaces.

For the online training during Covid-19, the concept of 'Matrixia' was developed by Manola Gayatri, as a means of creating a transformational space of safety that was relational and co-held. The 'Matrixia' utilised creative imagination and intuition in a collective, collaborative space that supported co-learning and co-thinking. This approach helped participants to find safety online as they were in control of the level of engagement, in their own safe space.

Freire's democratic pedagogy is also adopted in the HAPPy curriculum to create safety and agency through 'voice and choice.' This is an important principle in trauma-informed work, as trauma survivors frequently feel 'speechless,' experiencing a loss of agency (Malchiodi 2021).

4.3.2 Bandura's Social Cognitive Learning

Bandura's theory asserts the "importance of modelling and observational learning for personality development" (Olson and Hergenhahn 2011, 324). Cooperative learning strategies promote self-efficacy to improve health and therapeutic behaviours as well as academic achievement (Schunk 2012, 154). Bandura's pedagogical principles map well onto the African relational approach, where children can both learn and heal in community.

The HAPPy curriculum therefore makes use of 'bite-size' theoretical information (short, simple, clear and repeated) to maintain a safe learning space. This pedagogical approach prevents the overwhelming and triggering observed in other trauma training (Carello 2018). The approach was implemented through modelling, thereby providing opportunities for observational and experiential learning.

For example, during an online version of the training, trauma information was disseminated via memes on a social media platform. The meme challenges aimed to activate responses of the sympathetic nervous system that could 1) down-regulate defensive fight-flight responses, and 2) stimulate playful, enlivening, reviving, creative play to up-regulate freeze responses. The memes typically contained a trauma fact and possible solution, followed by a healing arts invitation. Now that the curriculum is being offered in person, the bite-size trauma information is followed by embodied experiential toolkit demonstrations.

4.3.3 Healing-Centred Engagements

While Freire and Bandura offer established pedagogies within the educational field, the work of Ginwright (2018) introduces a new perspective. Instead of focusing on the trauma, he asserts that individuals are much more than their particular trauma story and therefore uses the language of Healing-Centred Engagements. In order to explore the potential of post-traumatic growth, Ginwright asserts the value of developing a curriculum that is healing-centred, sustainable, positive, artistic, non-traumatising, culturally sensitive, communal and based in collective and relational philosophies such as Ubuntu. This pedagogical approach serves to develop the human strengths and skills of the participants in the service of overcoming fear (Sajnani and Johnson 2014).

4.4 Practices

Drawing on the theory and pedagogy presented above, the HAPPy curriculum uses distinctive rituals and practices. Practices drawn from Emergency Pedagogy, Expressive Arts, Drama Therapy, Applied Theatre, Mindfulness and Somatic work, and indigenous cultural traditions, were chosen to help stabilise and regulate the nervous system whilst stimulating self-regulation.

The following practices were used to develop and enhance a sense of safety in learning spaces:

- structured, rhythmic practice (Emergency Pedagogy)
- imagination, metaphor, and story (Drama Therapy)
- embodiment (Drama Therapy and Somatic work)
- regulating toolkit practices (Applied Theatre/Expressive Arts/Emergency Pedagogy)
- mindfulness and contemplative practices for self-regulation (Mindfulness and Somatic work)

4.4.1 A Structured, Rhythmic Practice

The curriculum follows a repetitive structure to create consistent, predictable rhythms that establish a sense of safety. Each module consists of a self-care moment, metaphor and story, theoretical sharing, and toolkit applications. Each activity was structured to provide activation and calming down moments, including set breaks to give participants time to integrate and assimilate experiences.

Each training day started with an opening ritual consisting of a verse, song and rhythm as used by Emergency Pedagogy. Speaking, singing, and moving in rhythm, creates harmony, attunement and safety as groups start to co-regulate and increase their sense of belonging. The same three elements in reverse order are used to complete and close the day's learning. This ritualised opening and closing provides clear boundaries of time, stabilisation, self-awareness, co-regulation and activating practices.

4.4.2 Imagination, Metaphor and Story

Trainers in trauma workshops frequently revert to using real traumatic incidents as examples to explain stress reactions or developmental stages of trauma. These *real traumas* cause secondary traumatisation and may even trigger participants, causing re-traumatisation.

Imagination, metaphor and story are therefore used in this curriculum to create 'distance' and encourage empathy. Distancing is a drama therapeutic tool that encourages the development of perspective while making room for empathy (safe emotional resonance, involvement and identification) (Jones 2007). Utilising imagination, metaphor and story can potentially prevent re-traumatisation and create a sense of safety, while making the content clear and accessible. A variety of stories have been chosen from different cultures to ensure distancing and multicultural representation.

Using the imagination to create a fantasy or imaginative role enables participants to establish a safe distance from which to explore a life situation (Jones 2007). Imagination stimulates portions of the neocortex and the thalamus (which can be impeded by trauma experiences) (Malchiodi 2020) and therefore works to re-establish executive function. The curriculum included imaginative drama games, positive visualisations and artistic work.

Using symbolic and metaphoric reality can explore a distanced way of "relating to problematic issues from life" (Jones 2007, 242). The theory was introduced

using metaphors such as Trauma as a Wound, a Cramp and a Threshold, as well as Post-Traumatic Growth. Six other metaphors have been developed to illustrate the impact of trauma on our thinking, behaviour and feeling capacities. "In drama therapy the therapeutic potential of symbols and metaphors is connected to dramatic scenarios – stories, improvisation, object play" (Jones 2007, 256). Our research found that stories provided opportunities to expound the metaphors. Dramatisation of the story safely enriched the learning experiences and provided embodied knowledge. After participants had come out of role, and during reflective discussions, it became clear that archetypal and symbolic images deepened learning.

4.4.3 Embodiment

Jones (2007) notes that embodiment "enables [clients] to represent together a trauma and to start to express responses towards it" (159). In the HAPPy curriculum, instead of merely teaching theoretical definitions of trauma, embodied investigations of trauma reactions are used to explore and conceptualise its impacts and effects. Careful use of image theatre techniques, theatre games, play and reflections are incorporated into the curriculum to provide distance yet allow empathy.

4.4.4 Regulating Toolkit Practices that Address Trauma Responses

The HAPPy curriculum offers a toolbox drawn from Emergency Pedagogy, Expressive Arts and Applied Drama to address trauma. In-person drama activations that include singing, dancing, movement and enactments, directly up-regulate the nervous system, restore brain function, and build communal harmony. Team- and trust-building games encourage resilience and co-regulation. Down-regulation happens when we engage in visual art creations that encourage silence – drawing, painting, sculpting, listening to stories, as well as breathwork and mindfulness. Arts-based activities can therefore down-regulate (calm down) hyperarousal or up-regulate (activate) hypoarousal, increasing levels of tolerance and response flexibility (Siegel 2012).

The HAPPy curriculum was presented to four interns of the Masphefumle Project who were placed in a distressed school in Gauteng. This project has as its vision the establishment of safe school spaces in all schools in South Africa through collaborative and communal engagement. It aims to implement a programme that stabilises and supports children through integrating and innovating pedagogical practices to enhance teaching and learning, while also nourishing the teachers, interns, mentors and researchers. The interns shared the toolkit practices from the training, whilst engaging in finding culturally appropriate alternatives and innovating new activities. Their experiences were shared during weekly supervision and data collection meetings.

4.4.5 Mindfulness and Contemplative Practices as Self-Care

Mindfulness practices, using both movement and breath, are included as part of the self-care section of this curriculum. While these are often associated with Eastern traditions, the work of Draper-Clarke and Green (n.d.) identifies contemplative practices from the African continent. "For nearly all of history, healers and shamans have called on drumming, dance, song, and visual arts to bring healing and balance. Despite ever-growing technological advances, the healing practices rooted in our ancestors remain powerful today" (Bopp et al. 2019). Such ancient rituals and practices have been shown to be effective for "nervous system regulation, developing pro-social qualities and community cohesion and inspiring a sacred sense of purpose," thus enhancing embodied and communal healing, wellbeing and flourishing (Draper-Clarke and Green n.d.).

In spiritual and cultural practices in South African communities, aspects of the arts are readily employed to teach people their own histories and share the wisdom of their ancestors for everyday living. Rituals conducted in community settings also engage people's natural healing and co-regulation capacities.

5.0 Discussion

We have outlined the theoretical underpinnings of the HAPPy curriculum, as well as the pedagogies and practices that have inspired this approach. Zuber-Skerritt's (1992) five distinctive features of action research guided our interdisciplinary approach to curriculum development. Drama therapists, applied drama practitioners, educators and contemplative practitioners collaborated to address the needs of learners and recommend ways of implementing the curriculum in order to respond, systemically, to distressed school communities. As reflective practitioners, De Beer and Draper-Clarke have put the theory into practice, evaluating its effectiveness during the first action research cycle. The results have been made public at a series of academic events (IDIERI 2022; ARA 2022; DFL Conference 2022) to seek feedback from the community and engage in participatory problem-solving.

Having observed university students, schoolchildren, teachers, lecturers and teaching assistants move from the fight/flight response to trauma, to a freeze response, we believe that it has become imperative for all South Africans, especially our teachers, to be empowered with knowledge and tools that address stress and anxiety, and the challenge of how to stabilise and regulate children immediately after traumatic experiences.

6.0 Conclusion

Hope is a form of planning'
– G Steinham

The HAPPy curriculum is currently being implemented in pilot schools in Gauteng as the Mas'phefumle project ('let's breathe together'). Trained interns have been placed in schools as teacher assistants to explore ways in which to support teachers and learners through these arts-based practices. They are also using the practices to self-regulate and resource themselves. Weekly reflection sessions with the teacher assistants have revealed how they are using the creative arts to support their school communities through playful, safe and collective ways that are culturally sensitive, inspire hope and positivity, activate self-healing and build resilience in children and adults alike. Research findings from this pilot project will be presented in due course, to make recommendations for scaling the project nationwide. There is an urgent need to address the trauma associated with cycles of violence, poverty and inequality in South Africa. Working in spaces of distress (schools), and working with the most vulnerable (children) steeped in historical trauma environments (distressed communities) is ethically complex and warrants careful research. We believe that by empowering teachers, who have the opportunity to co-regulate whole communities with Healing Arts Practices, we have an opportunity to change the South African trauma narrative.

Ethics Statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of the Witwatersrand, protocol number H20/09/07.

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MAKING ATMOSPHERES

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This paper discusses a practical methodology, developed for a second-year architectural elective project, that aims to make tangible the qualities of architectural atmospheres. It argues for an embodied practice of making sculptural artefacts. It proposes that these can articulate and make apparent atmospheric qualities. To be able to imagine or recognise atmosphere is a crucial skill for architects since atmosphere determines how people respond to space. The methodology is designed, through iterative cycles of making and critical reflection, to make students increasingly aware of atmosphere and develop their ability to create and articulate certain feeling tones within spaces. This artistic praxis relies upon a nonlinear, bodily knowing that seeks to challenge the dominance of ocularcentric practice in the discipline of architecture.

This paper explores some of the implications of a practical methodology for developing an embodied understanding of the nebulous world of architectural atmospheres. It discusses the outcomes of a second-year architectural elective undertaken during the Covid-19 pandemic, when students made 3D artefacts as a means of gaining insight into and articulating the atmospheric qualities identified from a digital experience of the Chapel of Notre-Dame du Haut in Ronchamp, France. Making sculptural artefacts is investigated as a tool capable of making tangible implicit, even ineffable, experiences of space. The artefacts enable the atmospheric to be articulated and communicated to others, creating a stage for critical reflection and dialogue to occur.

Spatial experience is characterised by a human body moving through space. The body's senses – tactile, olfactory, auditory and visual – come in contact with, and respond to, the distinctive properties of the space. Working in unison, the properties establish an atmosphere that evokes a distinct feeling tone (Griffero 2016). Atmospheres are experienced viscerally, through the "lived and felt body"(Schmitz 2019). This felt body is not identical to the physical anatomical body, but is rather an amorphous space through which we inwardly experience the body and its sensations (Griffero 2016).

Atmospheres influence how people feel about and react to space, architecture, and places. Ever present, these feelings may be subtle or overwhelmingly powerful, but they substantially colour our being-in-the-world, and are thus significant to architectural discourse, pedagogy, and practice (Bressani and Sprecher 2019).

But atmospheres present a difficulty. They are by their nature hard to identify and describe. Even though they can easily be sensed, they exist as a haze-like quality, or as a state of in-betweeness, something present between the observer and the space itself (Böhme 2017). This raises an epistemological concern within the discipline of architecture. It is difficult accurately to describe these felt sensations within the traditional architectural mediums of drawings, text, photographs and models. Because these mediums are the central means through which architectural discourse circulates, atmospheric qualities tend to become marginalised within practice, pedagogy and discourse more generally.

Nevertheless, atmospheres play a crucial role in the perception of space, and therefore an awareness of and ability to harness atmospheric qualities within the design process and the reading of space are arguably essential skills for those responsible for the built environment (Böhme 2017).

The architectural discipline is characterised by an ocularcentric hegemony (Pallasmaa 2012). Architectural drawings are typically established through projection types that have a proclivity to abstract, flatten and dissociate one from the complexities of the lived, embodied realities of an atmosphere (Hill 2003a). Since architects are trained to interpret and design spaces through drawings, and drawings limit the capacity for embodiment, they effectively restrict atmospheric thinking within the process of design.

In an attempt to address the issue, this paper explores a methodology that aims to develop a knowing, communicating, and teaching architecture that reveals atmospheric felt sensations more acutely. It favours an embodied practice that stimulates architectural thinking to challenge the dominance of ocular and drawing-centric methods and tradition. Still at an early stage, the research explores an artistic praxis that uses the making of sculptural artefacts as a medium to frame an understanding of atmospheres, finding ways of recognising more explicitly their qualities, affective nature and character, and how to articulate these.

Wittgenstein points out that "the limits of my language mean the limits of my world" (2001, 68). But is it possible for architects to work beyond the traditional limits of the language of drawing and immerse themselves within the qualities of an

atmosphere, for an enhanced understanding of architectural space that can in turn impart a greater immediacy to the design process?

This paper discusses a second-year architectural elective run for a semester at the School of Architecture and Planning at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa. This occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic when students were unable to visit an actual space. Instead, they were asked to explore the iconic chapel of Notre Dame du Haut at Ronchamp (Le Corbusier 1955).

This example was chosen to exploit the plethora of online documentation that exists in a variety of formats. Students were tasked with describing their own internal responses to an experience of the atmosphere of the chapel, and iteratively cast these in plaster of Paris (Gallagher 1986). The chapel as a flattened experience served as a starting point for the project. Neils Albertsen claims that one can only truly understand an atmosphere by being fully immersed within it (Albertsen 2012), but for as long as the pandemic lasted there would not be an opportunity for students to access the same space and personally experience the nuanced realities of place, landscape and architecture. The methodology therefore sought ways to overcome the disembodied digital experience. Importantly, it did not seek to replicate the experience of the chapel itself but encouraged students to generate their own embodied atmospheric experiences, drawn from a reading of the images of the chapel but rooted in their own lived realities, responses, and context.



Figure 1. Fraser, H. 2008. Ronchamp. Reprinted under permission from author.



Figure 2. Mabuda, N. 2021. Gypsum . Student project articulating exterior form, seeking to express the difference between identical heavy masses, the one grounded and other floating. The artefact on the right shows the further articulation that occurs through the iterative process. Image: Mabuda, N.

Limited instructions were given online for working with materials. These included techniques for creating moulds out of High Impact Polystyrene (HIPS), casting in plaster of Paris, and finishing off the artefact. Predictably, the initial results were poor in their resolution. But since the process was iterative in its nature, over time students developed a deeper understanding of the material's qualities and began experimenting and innovating with the processes. I was surprised by how quickly students invented techniques and developed skills. Frequently the agency and qualities of the material would deform students' preconceived conceptions of the artefact. By following the material's characteristics and agency they often arrived at new understandings.

For this project, students focused on generating a singular expression for their response to the images of the chapel.

The initial attempts are essentially a response to bodily or " gut" feelings. The qualities that students envision and wish the artefact to express are rarely achieved in the first iteration. Translating a feeling, giving it form as a spatial expression, is remarkably difficult. The results never arrive at what was initially intended, as the material always resists the imposition of preconceived ideas in ways that stem from the complexities of making. It is also impossible to anticipate the whole with its nuanced material reality when conceiving the artefact. When the first artefact was completed, its expressive and communicative qualities were evaluated through critical class discussion. The mismatch between conception and realisation requires constant re-evaluation of what is seen and understood. This reflective process gives students insights into the atmospheric qualities of their own and others' work, revealing avenues of possibility for further development. This process is repeated through numerous cycles, with each pass achieving greater articulation.

To arrive at certain expressive qualities, a high level of precision in the manipulation of material properties and form is required. Also required is an expressive balance between the various qualities, as each has a dramatic impact on the other. For example, when an attempt is made to convey certain affects through light qualities or how the artefact is illuminated, the light must be of a very particular nature.

Brightness, hue, the position of the light source, the kind of surface it falls on, and the type of shadows that are cast are all specific dimensions. Each dramatically impacts other qualities within the artefact, determining how it is read, felt and understood. In experimenting with these qualities, students begin to understand nuanced values and their impact within the material world.

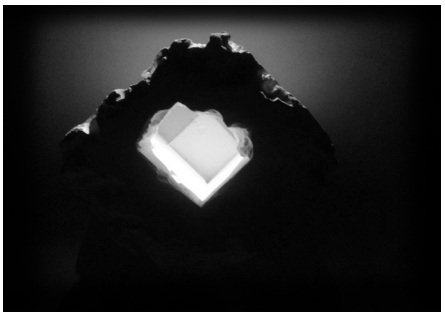


Figure 3. Nkohla, A. 2022. Gypsum. Student project articulating spiritual quality of light. Image: Nkohla, A. 2022.

Importantly, here, the qualities and effects of light, materials, form etc., are actual, embedded and tempered in the specificity, subtlety and complexity of real qualities, not imagined ones. To recognise how the qualities of materials express themselves, and how to manipulate them into particular configurations, form part of the pedagogical goal of getting architectural students to become versed in a material language, the basic building blocks of architectural scenography. This is especially vital for a generation largely enfolded in an artificial, spaceless, immaterial digital experience.

Even though the artefacts are a form of representation, they do not occupy the same fictional space as, say, a drawing would. They may have affinities and similarities to architectural models, but are fundamentally distinct. The artefacts do not refer to and stand in for something larger, as the representational values do in architectural models. They are indeed miniaturised as models, but they are intended to realise, hold and manifest certain tones of feeling.

Through their engagement in the process of making, of working with materials and realising the sculptural artefacts' qualities, students experience real lived and spatial affects. Initially these experiences are tacit, automatic and instinctual, but are important because they are foundational and sensed within the body. Through successive cycles of reflection, the experiences and sensations become increasingly explicit, describable and (through the models) tangible. This process unfolds partially through the discussion in class, but also in further attempts to refine the qualities of the model in the iterative remaking process.

This continuous cycle of making, reflection and evaluation, and re-making, is understood as a methodology. The recalibration of the design through successive cycles in response to what is discovered develops an embodied understanding with an evolving ability to read, create and describe particular affective qualities within the atmospheric experience. In the cycle of making and remaking, a dialogue is established with the artefact/s that emerges from questioning how to accentuate certain expressions and how to minimise or eliminate others. This continual refinement is the process of learning an atmospheric language. The methodology trains architectural students to become experientially aware and develops in them an ability and sensitivity to navigate the subtle realm of the relationship between atmospheric feelings and their generation in the spatial / formal / material matrix.

The anthropologist Tim Ingold terms this "correspondence," in the sense that it allows students to respond to, and correspond with, the realities of their world (Ingold 2013). The recognition of how spaces, places and architecture affect their being-in-the-world will inform students' design work in the future.

Making plays a central role as it facilitates an embodied experience of first-hand and direct understanding of the feeling tones of atmospheres, what Ingold (2013) calls learning from the "inside." The process of making places the students' feeling bodies in direct contact with materials, forms and qualities through continuous handling, touching, smelling and hearing of the material. This enlivens perceptions of the material. It is no longer something that is mute, dead and inanimate, but rather something vibrant, alive and possessing agency (Bennett 2010). It is distinct in its qualities, reactive and transformed in the processes of making. These are lived experiences, and while they happen externally, one senses them as the co-presence of oneself alongside the materials (Galati 2002). Making forces the students' bod-

ies to move around the artefact in close and intimate ways, allowing them to fully perceive it in the round.

As inevitably happens with making, a self-identification with the artefact emerges, allowing it to become an extension of the body, similar in ways to how a hammer becomes an extension of a craftsperson's body (Gallagher 2021). In combination, the processes described above create a sense that the material, the artefact and its qualities become embodied, in the sense of being alive within the body.



Figure 4. Jassat, T. 2022. Gypsum . Student project articulating the juxtaposition of textural qualities understood in the round. Image: Jassat, T. 2022

Due to the emotive nature of atmospheres and the difficulty of describing their qualities, other formats for explicating the experience of atmospheres (e.g., text or drawings) can become highly abstract and esoteric. Through the surrogacy of the artefacts, the pedagogic practice described here maintains some fidelity to the felt sensations of spaces, and manages to illuminate the qualities responsible for them through the medium in which they are experienced. This makes a useful contrast with the inevitable flattening and abstraction that occurs in translation into the traditional architectural mediums.

Although the embodied experience remains in a sense ineffable, the exacting way in which qualities are exposed in the artefact facilitates the recognition of a nonlinear, nonverbal feeling as a form of knowing. According to the example of the constructivist sculptors, the Stenberg brothers (Stenberg et al. 1919), the artefacts can be understood as a spatial apparatus, an experiential measuring tool to evaluate spatial experiences, qualities and affect, and evolve a language of felt perceptions, an experiential dictionary of architectonic phrases. This can later serve as a foundational experience in the design of spaces, places and buildings.

The artefact develops understanding from two perspectives that reveal knowing in different ways: looking from the inside out, and looking from the outside in.

From the inside out, at the start of the project, students are attempting to articulate their own intangible experiences and give them form through the artefact. This happens within a nonverbal, interior psychic space that consists of bodily encounters, in dialogue "with a world of active and entangled materials" (Ingold 2013, 34), and can be described as the "writing" phase. The making of the artefacts plays the role of a "double," providing a conduit through which students can externalise their inner sensations. The making of the artefact is an ongoing process of synthesis, negotiation and distillation that mediates between the chapel (the source of the imagery responsible for the sense of atmosphere), the feelings themselves and the artefact (Cross 2006; Ingold 2013). Because of the indeterminacy of the brief, students cannot default to existing tropes of architectural style and form, but have to seek an authentic expression, developing their own architectural syntax based on their reading (Ingold 2013).

Once a cycle of making an artefact is completed, it is presented to the class for critical discussion. The vantage point of "seeing" the artefact changes now to a process of looking from the outside in, a process of "reading." Even though the artefact has evocative capabilities, it does require elaboration from the author to unlock it (Mäkelä 2007). Thereafter, however, it becomes a facilitating aid that assists students to articulate ephemeral internal experiences and a window through which others can glimpse these experiences (Cross 2006). By looking back through the artefact, as it were, and having previously been involved in its making and realisation, the maker experiences an access of atmospheric feelings.

By reading the embedded architectural language of space and form, through and with the artefact, students become aware of an affective architectural syntax that they perceive through the primary knowledge of their own selves. When making the artefact students are embedded and entangled in the psychological space of their thinking, the making process, and the chapel. Nigel Cross, the design researcher,

proposes that designers think and know in a manner that is intrinsically tacit. Once completed, the externalisation process of the artefact – being able to see it in tangible form – allows students to step back from the entanglements and reflect through the artefact, becoming more self-aware of their own internal responses to architecture, atmospheres and their translation into form. Making is then an explicit means of grappling with the implicit realm of architectural experience and the design process. The resultant awareness forms an essential part of students' design education (Cross 2006).

Importantly, this form of knowing emerged from the students' own lived experiences, interpretations and observations, developed through a careful listening to the responses of their own bodies. It establishes an authentic and grounded understanding of architectural space rooted in the felt sensibilities of a particular place.

The aim of the exercise was not to replicate established discourse on the chapel, nor for students to accurately describe or document experiences within the chapel. Rather, the chapel served as a point of departure for students to look, listen, feel and become aware of what their own being – their own responses and their own engagements with the flux of the world and its materials – has to offer them. The aim was to develop architects who have the sensitivity to be aware of, and follow, their internal responses to space, instead of replicating tropes of architectural style already prevalent in the profession.

In this project, an artistic practice is used as a methodology with which to explore the unique qualities of atmospheres. The tools of making and the artefact enable a first-hand, nonverbal understanding of the language of materials, form, space and ultimately atmospheres. An ongoing dialectic that provokes, probes, guides, questions, denies and validates, allows one to understand from the "inside" (Ingold 2013). The process serves as a means of revealing the intangible aspects of spatial experiences that form a meaningful and valuable part of human experience and how we are in-the-world. The research depends on bodily encounters with the expressive and auratic qualities that are intrinsic to or embedded within objects and materials. The resultant knowledge is not intellectual but inhabits feelings and sensations inherent in the expressive qualities of architectural space.

The process serves two purposes for architectural pedagogy and practice. First, it reveals qualities of feeling inherent in space, bringing to light a syntax and vocabulary of architectural affects. Secondly, it seeks to redress the ocularcentric and intellectualised nature of architectural practice. This was established during the Renaissance, to elevate the architectural profession as an intellectual elite, operating in the prestige of distal offices away from the mess and noise of site. This disconnected architects from the process of making, from lived relationships with material and site that were previously entangled in the practice and role of the master mason during the medieval period (Hill 2003b).

In conclusion, the outside in and inside out modes of working, the making and the artefacts themselves, become tools for thinking with, by and through, so as both to undergo and witness the process. They become a means to grapple with the ephemeral and intangible experience of space. The methodology described above allows forms of knowing that would otherwise remain entirely tacit to enter into design pedagogy and practice in more tangible ways, but without deforming their nature in translation.

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ART IN ACTION RESEARCH (AIAR): INTEGRATING TACIT KNOWLEDGE INTO RESEARCH

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This paper introduces the concept of Art in Action Research (AiAR) as an alternative paradigm for art practitioners working in sociocultural settings. AiAR aims to accommodate diverse notions of art, theories, and knowledge bases, integrating tacit knowledge into research frameworks. The paradigm is grounded in the issues emerging from the work environment, focusing on real-life challenges to co-create a liveable future. The paper addresses the need for methodological guides in researching art practitioner perspectives and discusses the concepts of knowledge and tacit knowledge. It explores the problem of non-groundedness in art practitioner research and highlights the global turn and the need for retooling disciplinary perspectives. In sum, the paper argues that AiAR provides an alternative paradigm for methodology crafting that considers the global turn and acknowledges diverse notions of art and knowledge bases.

Introduction

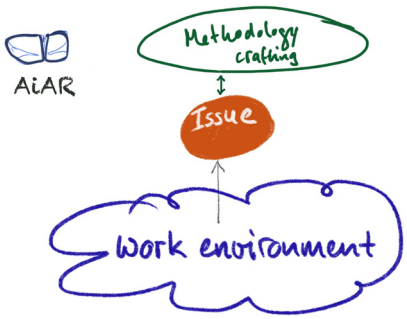


Figure 1. Lämmli, Dominique (2023). AiAR Supports Issue-Grounded "Methodology Crafting".

This paper introduces an *alternative art practitioner paradigm* for working *on* and *through* art in sociocultural settings: Art in Action Research (AiAR). AiAR can accommodate diverse notions of art, knowledge bases, theories, and concepts from various disciplines and regions. The approach includes integrating tacit knowledge into research frameworks. AiAR configures methodology (hereafter "methodology crafting") as grounded in issues emerging from the work environment. Such issues include settings in which the art practitioner researcher (or art practitioner team) tackle a real-life challenge *on* and *through* art to co-create a liveable future.

Being strategic, the AiAR paradigm is not predetermined by theories and concepts of how to be in the world or how to see things. Rather, its disciplinary perspective is that of an artist (self-)reflectively grounding all aspects of their research in the issue being researched – including the choice of theories, concepts and methods. Further, AiAR accepts what Ibanga (2018, 134) calls "logical argumentation as necessary to methodology." Even though AiAR introduces a paradigm shift into fine art and related artistic research, its approach is not uncommon in other disciplines. Among others, AiAR is informed by principles applied in health practitioner studies (Drake and Heath 2011).[1]

Much has been written about socially engaged art, with scholars offering revealing insights into working with art in socio-cultural settings (e.g., Ferguson et al. 1990; Kent 2016; Miller 2015; Moiloa 2021; Mōri 2015). Many exhibitions worldwide have been dedicated to the topic.[2] However, what has been lacking so far are methodological guides and discussions on how such activities can be researched from art practitioner perspectives that take into account the global turn.[3]

What is knowledge? What is tacit knowledge? And how do these questions relate to the supranational developments that have played a role in the emergence of artistic research? The first section of this paper (*Tacit Knowledge*) addresses these questions insofar as they are relevant to AiAR. Section 2 (*The Problem of Non-Groundedness*) discusses the experiences and observations that have led to the development of AiAR. Section 3 (*The Global Turn and Research Paradigms*) addresses the need to retool disciplinary perspectives in general and art studies and artistic research in particular. Section 4 (*Research Design, Paradigm, Methodology*) disambiguates several basic concepts and terms. Section 5 (*Developing AiAR*) describes the research apparatus applied in developing AiAR while Section 6 (*The Principles of AiAR*) presents the final results of the study. The principles developed help to configure research as an interrelated web of particularities including issue-relevant theories, knowledge bases and methods. The accuracy and reliability of, and justification for, grounded research are discussed in Section 6 under the heading *Validity*. Section 7 (*Eliciting Notions of Art*) introduces orientation points capable of eliciting project-relevant art notions. The paper ends with some *Concluding Remarks*.

Tacit Knowledge

Knowledge is a contested term. Heated debates about what should be considered knowledge have accompanied the introduction of artistic research (Almeida 2015; Borgdorff 2012; Elkins 2009; Fisher and Mottram 2006; Mäkelä et al. 2011; Vaage 2020). Far-reaching technological developments and corresponding shifts in research landscapes have contributed to the questioning of top-down knowledge dissemination, from universities to professionals. In the context of

this debate, Donald Schön (1983) has called for an "epistemology of practice implicit in artistic, intuitive processes" (49). His concept of *reflection-in-action* has been widely referenced in discussions of types of knowledge in artistic research. Candy (2020) has further refined Schön's concept. Much-referenced works in the literature on artistic research also include Gibbons et al. (1994) and Scott et al. (2004), who conceptualised different modes of knowledge. While we need not dwell on the controversies over artistic and scientific knowledge production here, it is worth noting that artistic research has emerged from supranational policy attempts to standardise data collection pertaining to research and development (R&D).[4] This has happened not because art was valued as a producer of knowledge, but, on the contrary, because it was explicitly excluded from R&D categories (Borgdorff 2009). R&D brings together academic (research) and industrial (development) activities and is seen as a key driver of economic growth.[5] This phenomenon is known as the knowledge economy (Powell and Snellman 2004).[6] The acceptance of artistic research as a field of academic research can be traced through the editions of the Frascati Manual (FM).[7] Published by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the manual's title refers to the venue of the first meeting, the Villa Frascati in Italy, where in 1963 the OECD brought together national experts to identify features that might underpin R&D efforts. The Frascati Manual (FM) is a cornerstone of the OECD's efforts to increase understanding of the roles played by science, technology and innovation. Whereas the sixth edition of the FM, published in 2002, did not mention artistic research (but included the history of art), the seventh edition, published in 2015, explicitly includes various arts as fields in R&D classifications. The Vienna Declaration on Artistic Research (AEC et al., n.d.), recently published by several European artistic research associations, "aims at [...] presenting a clearer, better articulation of the concepts and impact of AR within the Frascati Manual" (n.d., 1).[8]

In academic settings, knowledge has mostly been understood as propositional, that is, as warranted truth and as codified knowledge (Archibugi 2021; Gourlay 2002). But in the context of changing socio-ecological landscapes, scholars of systems change, post-development and global studies have highlighted the pluriverse state of our world and the need to integrate diverse knowledge forms (Kothari et al. 2019; Rehbein 2015; Tàbara and Chabay 2013).

Practitioner researchers, because of their professional work, have intimate and tacit knowledge. They have integrated what things are like and how they are done in practice; they are also (unconsciously) aware of the basic and tacit assumptions underlying their work environment. They must at the same time maintain distance from their subject matter to gain an objective research perspective (Lämmli 2022). Moreover, members of a community combine various sets of beliefs, values and ways of approaching life.

Loosely speaking, tacit knowledge, refers to "knowing something without being able to tell it" (Gourlay 2002, 16). The term is not used uniformly. Points of discussion include whether tacit "knowing" is explicable or not (Collins and Reber 2013) and whether it is personal or collective, or both, and embedded in social processes and relationships (Gourlay 2002).

Tacit knowledge is often classed in the "motor-skills category," like riding a bike (Gourlay 2002, referring to Collins 2001). Such skills and techniques involve learning by doing, through experience, imitation, trial and error, and observing others (Archibugi 2021). Collins (2001) emphasises that tacit knowledge can only be shared through personal contacts or "communal sharing of stories" (Gourlay 2002, citing Choo 1998, 117).

The Problem of Non-Groundedness

I realised that art practitioner research needed to be reshaped (or better, "retooled") when I was co-creating and co-working with colleagues in Malawi, Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Hong Kong and Switzerland. I therefore initiated and co-organised several workshops and symposia for the purpose.[9]

These sharing sessions taught me even more about best practices and the challenges of working *on* and *through* art in various regions of the world. In addition, many colleagues and art collectives have let me participate in and experience their work. Besides first-hand experience, I gained in-depth insights from these projects into how artists activate setting-specific dynamics, and thereby bring about real-life changes and co-create liveable futures.

When reflecting on and writing about my learning, I found that existing art studies and artistic research frameworks did not provide the tools needed adequately to address the kinds of learning and achievement endemic to the field.

For several years, I tried to solve this problem; I explored various theories and concepts (e.g., the capability approach and glocalisation) to render visible and discuss important developments in working with art in socio-cultural settings, and thereby contribute to real-life changes (e.g., Lämmli 2014, 2017). Having trained as an artist as well as a philosopher, I am used to accessing reality through diverse lenses. However, discourses on art (still) tend to be subject to the claims of universality and the essentialism (i.e., non-groundedness) prevalent in art historical research – although no one would seriously claim that art is not always contextually informed.

Failing to make progress, I began doing transformative research in global studies under the supervision of the global theorist Boike Rehbein, for whose support I am much indebted. My work focused on configuring the baseline discourses needed to develop an alternative paradigm in support of an art practitioner perspective that considers the global turn. Art in Action Research (AiAR), the resulting art practitioner paradigm, offers such an alternative.



Figure 2. FOA-FLUX (2023). Project Impressions.



Figure 3. FOA-FLUX (2015). Visual Notes. Voices on connecting people and working with art in social contexts and transformation processes. Concept of Visual Notes by Grace Samboh and Dominique Lämmli. Filming and editing by Sandra Bühler. Presenters: Andung Kelana, Ismal Muntaha, Pandu Rahdian, Grace Samboh, Ila Syukrillah Syarief, Debrina Tedja and Helmi Hardian. https://artandsociety.net/talks-and-more (17 April 2023).

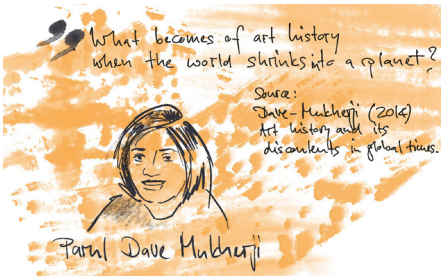


Figure 4. Lämmli, Dominique (2020). Quote Parul Dave Mukherji. Digital image.

The Global Turn and Research Paradigms

In general, research paradigms have come under increasing pressure to change. The notion of the pluriverse has gained prominence in recent years, drawing attention to the variety of ways of being in the world (Kothari et al. 2019). Theorists have discussed the effects of globalisation processes on the basic assumptions of disciplinary perspectives (Albrow 1996, Rehbein 2015). Feminist, decolonising and indigenous voices have criticised existing research frameworks for decades (Coburn et al. 2013; Ibanga 2018; Lather 1993; Thambinathan and Kinsella 2021; Wiredu 2002).

Profound shifts in how art is understood, discussed and practised are evident worldwide. However, these shifts affect the practice of art and the discourse of art in different ways. Whereas art discourse has been driven into disarray (precisely because its systems of reference tend to remain static), art practice has rapidly expanded its importance, capacity and possibilities. Art practice now co-inhabits an increasing number of other disciplinary and social domains. Its

purpose – to inform and enrich everyday life, social processes and scientific fields – has become highly significant and is still growing (Lämmli 2014).

Research landscapes have begun shifting, particularly in the field of fine arts and related artistic research. Change, however, is slow: limited understandings of art, rooted in specific traditions and histories, are still passed on as universal. This ongoing malaise recurred, yet again, in the debates on *Documenta Fifteen* (Deml 2023).[10] It was especially puzzling to hear some European colleagues say, "I don't understand it; it isn't art," linking the statements as though they constituted an argument.

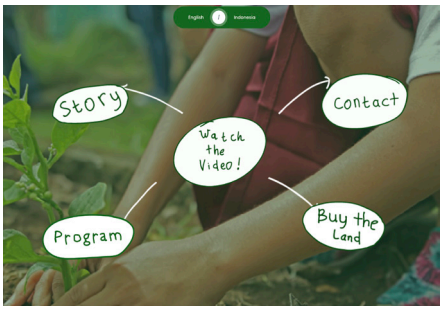


Figure 5. Jatiwangi art Factory (JaF) (n.d.). Perhutana (Perusahaan Hutan Tanaraya) – land reclamation for a "sacred", conservatory forest. https://perhutana.id (17 April 2023). JaF is a documenta fifteen lumbung member and part of the "lumbung land" working group.

Research Design, Paradigm, Methodology

Studies on methodologies do not use key terms such as paradigm and methodology uniformly (Kivunja and Kuyini 2017). The term paradigm, for example, has been defined in various ways. Drawing on Morgan (2007), Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) argue that "a paradigm means a worldview, a paradigm is an epistemological stance, a paradigm is a set of shared beliefs among members of a specialty area and, a paradigm is] a model example of research" (29). However, understanding a paradigm as a "worldview" is no longer timely. Nowadays, researchers are increasingly trained to look through the lenses of various paradigms, depending on what is needed and what we intend to do. And, depending on the beliefs and basic assumptions informing such a paradigm, we see different things, which in turn influences the kind of results we obtain.

My 2021 study on Art in Action Research (AiAR) embraces pluralism and thus accepts that various paradigms and ways of understanding the world co-exist. Accordingly, a paradigm is not given but chosen. AiAR thus defines and distinguishes the key terms as follows:

- *Research design* is an umbrella term that includes the *paradigm*, *type of research*, *research question* or *hypotheses* (or both), and *methodology*.
- A *paradigm* is a lens through which we access our subject of investigation. Its *principles* guide *methodology* crafting.
- *Methodology* refers to a particular research procedure and specifies the theories and concepts, methods and rules important in a particular study.

A wide range of research types exists, including transformative, exploratory, experimental, descriptive and comparative. I distinguish an art practitioner perspective and arts-based methods: art practitioner research may include arts-based methods as well as other methods from across various disciplines.

Developing AiAR

Three empirical observations motivated my study: (1) Working with art in socio-cultural settings is rapidly increasing worldwide. Accordingly, (2) immense practical knowledge and know-how about working *on* and *through* art to co-create liveable futures exists out in the world. (3) There is a pressing need to develop art practitioner research that considers the *global turn*.

Next, the empirically well-grounded hypothesis of the study served to define the steps to be taken in developing an alternative art practitioner paradigm, since a paradigm shift is what is needed to define the principles of art practitioner re-

search. Achieving this paradigm shift requires following a five-step process: (1) analysing the paradigmatic assumptions about art and the attempts made so far to overcome these dominant notions; (2) specifying the critical features of the canonisation of art; (3) contextualising and assessing the limits of existing approaches within art research; (4) determining the discussed specifics of practitioner research across disciplines; (5) defining the principles of art practitioner research (AiAR).

The fourfold conceptual apparatus used in the analyses included the kaleidoscopic dialectic (Rehbein 2015), transdisciplinarity (Mittelstrass 2001), glocalisation (Robertson 1992) and meta-narrative synthesis (Grant and Booth 2009). The last-mentioned concept was needed to configure the baseline discourses, whose conclusions were then used to define the principles of AiAR.

Accordingly, the chapters following the *Introduction* and *Approach* dealt with the diversity of art, the canonisation of art, the supra-national emergence of artistic research, and the methodological features of practitioner research across disciplines. To discuss these topics, I configured a baseline discourse for every chapter, guided by the criteria of meta-narrative synthesis.[11] Configuration led to three conclusions about an alternative paradigm capable of taking into account the global turn: first, (1) notions of art must be removed from the art practitioner research base; instead, (2) notions of art should be elicited through the research process; (3) methodology crafting needs to be grounded in the research process, which centres on the issue emerging from the work environment. These conclusions served to further substantiate the sixteen principles of AiAR (see below).

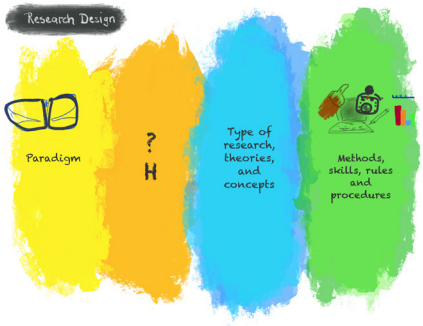


Figure 6. Lämmli, Dominique (2023). Research Design.



Figure 7. Lämmli, Dominique (2023). Paradigm.

Transformative research contributes to radically changing the understandings and actions in a research field. AiAR does so by introducing a paradigm for methodology crafting which contrasts with artistic research emerging from the fine arts, where non-grounded, universal claims of what art is (or is not) supposed to be impede further development of the global phenomenon of Art in Action (Lämmli 2014). AiAR corresponds well to professional art practitioner procedures. Its crafting of methodology reflects how I have seen artists and collectives work and develop their projects, even if these are not formulated and written up in terms of formal, logical argumentation. As such, AiAR narrows the gap between professional and academic work, and thereby supports and guides the crafting of rigorous methodologies.

While AiAR introduces a paradigm shift in the fine arts and artistic research (see *Introduction*), grounded methodology is not uncommon in other disciplines. Drake and Heath (2011), for example, explicitly note that health practitioner research is grounded research, that is, rooted in issues emerging from the work environment. They provide detailed accounts of the challenges facing insider *researchers*.[12] They also discuss various aspects that need attention, including negotiating the diverse roles of insider researchers in practitioner research projects, not least being professionals *and* researchers. However, Drake and Heath do not conceptualise grounded methodology. Another case in point is sociology, where grounded theory emerged in the 1960s (Glaser and Strauss 2006). Like other theories, grounded theory provides narratives that serve as points of orientation for research. Specific to grounded theory, however, is that it generates narratives "from real life occurrences" (Kivunja and Kuyini 2017). Grounded methodology, accordingly, elicits methods from the researched setting and project-related specificities. Grounded methodology might work with existing *and* grounded theories, depending on what best suits a project. Grounding research in issues emerging from the work environment affects understandings of validity (see below).

The Principles of AiAR

AiAR and its principles enable the inclusion of various notions of art and art knowledge bases, as well as theories, concepts and methods from various disciplines and regions. Sixteen principles were derived from the baseline discourses. The principles include grounding research in issues emerging from the work environment and excluding universalising notions of art from the research base. Rather, project-related understandings of art are elicited through the research process. Throughout the process, it is important to realise that notions of art – as well as other understandings and actions relevant to a project – are rooted *in particular contextual and historical knowledge formations*. Reflecting on these project-relevant "sites" contributes to configuring research as a web of interrelated particularities, including project-relevant traditionscapes and histories. Further principles ensure that thought traditions and knowledge bases relevant to the research are made explicit, such as eliciting (otherwise tacit and tacitly accepted) project-relevant notions of art.

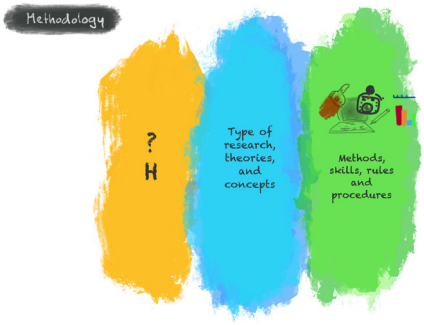


Figure 8. Lämmli, Dominique (2023). Methodology.

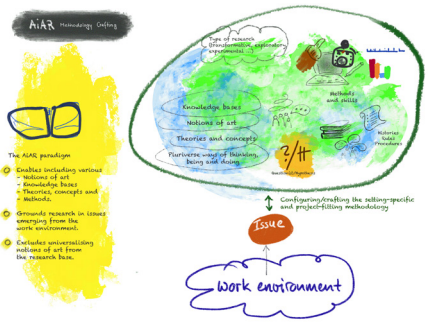


Figure 9. Lämmli, Dominique (2023). AiAR. Methodology Crafting.

The full list of AiAR principles:[13]

1. Approach research from an art practitioner perspective.
2. Focus on issues which emerge from the work environment.
3. Place the issue centre stage.
4. Do not include any notions of art in the research base.
5. Remain aware of the glocal rootedness and pluralism of art.
6. Elicit the notions of art through the research process.
7. Embrace pluri-perspectivity in regard to how the research is conducted and configured.
8. Explicitly state the thought traditions informing the research.
9. Configure the particulars in relation to other particularities, positionalities and histories.
10. Ground theories, methods and configurations in setting specificities and in the research process.
11. Aim to achieve practice-relevant and setting-specific research results.
12. Distinguish the art practitioner research stance and arts-based methods.
13. Choose theories and methods from various disciplines for their fitness-for-purpose.
14. State the forms and sites of transdisciplinarity.
15. Construct the validity of the outcomes in relation to the research issue, goal(s) and procedures.
16. Address the glocal positionality of the research perspective, setting, procedure and outcomes.[14]

Validity

Validity concerns the extent to which research findings are accurate, reliable and justified. Grounded research understands the validity of research *relative* to (1) the research question (Whitehead 2008), (2) the project-related configurations of particularities (Rehbein 2015), and (3) the methods and procedures chosen to investigate a subject. Validation is thus grounded in the research process. Lather's (1993) research theory characterises validity as "a space of constructed visibility" (Lather 1993, 674). In that sense, grounded research includes "uncovering what the research does and does not privilege" (Drake and Heath 2011, 38). Hence, the criterion for

trustworthy research is that *it is a construct that relates to* issue-driven and case-study oriented research (Drake and Heath 2011, invoking Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The research paradigm, research design, selection of methods, and cycles of critical reflectivity must be formulated explicitly in terms of what is researched, rather than built on procedures defined *a priori* (Drake and Heath 2011). The contexts of thought informing AiAR are thus made explicit. The theories and methods selected to form a particular research framework do not follow *a priori* research protocols but are grounded in a specific research setting and research process. The subject matter(s), that is, the particulars, are configured in relation to other particulars, positionalities and histories. Correspondingly, project validity is not geared towards universalised standards but constructed in relation to the research issue, goal(s) and procedures.

Eliciting Notions of Art

As a rule, socially engaged art brings together people from all walks of life, diverse groups, social classes, religious and political attitudes, and convictions. AiAR provides orientation points for eliciting project-relevant art notions. It does not aim to fully describe all the notions of art existing in a particular socio-cultural setting at a given time. Instead, AiAR elicits those notions that are relevant to the research and activities in the setting concerned. Eliciting notions of art provides information on how particular works, ideas and actions are valued over time and in given settings. Elicitation thus also guides introducing, grounding and generating acceptance of and initiating participation in particular activities. Thus, as I have observed in various art collectives, eliciting notions of art, and thus accepting particular ideas, goes hand in hand with creating notions of art, usually involving extensive negotiation processes.

Art discourses are narratives. These narratives convey, pinpoint, value, reflect on and position art ideas, activities and productions. As part of developing AiAR, I discussed the critical features of canon formation and then developed an ideal-type model of canonisation which summarises these features in six points. These orientation points correspond to the general mechanisms of canonisation and guide eliciting notions of art in AiAR. The points[15] are wisdom, authority, narratives, corpus, fluid dynamics and pluri-perspectivity. Their specifics are summarised in the table below.

Ideal-Type Model of Canonisation

	Orientation Points	Specifics
1	Wisdom	Wisdom is the grand narrative of a community and is constituted by belief systems active within that community. Belief systems can be informed by rational, cosmological, spiritual, religious and other forces.
2	Authority	Authority sanctions valorisation processes and their outcomes. The authority or authority constellation has the power to influence or command thought, opinion or behaviour, and to assign value to ideas, work and actions. The authority accepted within a particular community, in whatever form or constellation, plays a significant role in sanctioning the results of valorisation processes.

3	Narratives	Narratives assign value to the works, ideas and strategies in particular socio-cultural settings. Narratives are rooted in larger, grand narratives (i.e., wisdom). Without wisdom, such narratives are meaningless.
4	Corpus	The body of works, figures, interpretations, perspectives and activities valued over others at a given time in a particular socio-cultural setting is not fixed but fluid. Hence, the body of "works" is always temporary.
5	Fluid dynamics	The works, ideas and strategies valued in a particular socio-cultural setting change continuously. Diachronic and synchronic changes are fluid. Diachronic changes refer to evolution and transformation over time. Synchronic changes refer to internal pluralism. Thus, constant revaluing occurs from the centre to the periphery, and vice versa.
6	Pluriperspectivity	More often than not, more than one art canon exists within a community. Thus, it is important to map the art canons existing within a community

Lämmli (2022). The Ideal-Type Model of Canonisation is partly based on Grever (2007), Grever & Stuurman (2007), Morphy & Perkins (2006), and Westphal (1993).

The six orientation points for eliciting art notions indicate what matters when eliciting AiAR-relevant notions of art. Artists working with art in socio-cultural settings to improve living environments often take a transformative stance. They strive to actively change living conditions, which often involves changing habits and thought patterns.

Thus, configuring notions of art in AiAR always involves eliciting existing notions *and* constructing new, project-relevant narratives. Configuring an AiAR project, then, integrates diverse understandings of art and thus accepts pluri-perspectivity about what art is, should or could be. As mentioned, AiAR is not interested in completely mapping all the notions of art informing a particular setting. Instead, it configures the critical notions of art, that is, those essential to a particular AiAR project, in relation to the other particularities and positionalities of the research in question.

In sum, eliciting such narratives involves integrating "fluid dynamics," "pluri-perspectivity" and "wisdom." It keeps sight of the authority constellations regarding notions of art, integrates these dynamics into AiAR, and actively contributes to reformulating the "corpus."

Concluding Remarks

Even though my 2021 study (published in 2022) developed the orientation points of the ideal-type model to elicit art notions, parts of that model might be useful to describe the diverse knowledge bases existing in research *on* and *through* working with art in socio-cultural settings.

For example, focusing on narratives relevant to a research issue might help to elicit values, ideas and ways of doing, and thus the pluriverse informing a particular research setting. Moreover, pluri-perspectivity, as an orientation point, might draw attention to the diverse readings of the same conditions or occurrences. Finally, ori-

enting parts of the grounded methodology towards a corpus might generate additional methods for approaching a particular phenomenon.

The ideal-type model of canonisation might therefore extend beyond eliciting glocal art rootings. Importantly, though, the model does not commit to any particular content or concepts. Rather, the orientation points serve as strategic tools for eliciting understandings and actions that are relevant to co-creating liveable futures and that help to avoid one's becoming trapped in limited art understandings and knowledge production.

This paper has introduced AiAR, an alternative art practitioner paradigm. AiAR might provide helpful orientation points to configure grounded research for working *on* and *through* art in socio-cultural settings. AiAR supports grounded methodology crafting, that is, configuring and developing a project-fitting methodology by addressing issues emerging from the work environment. AiAR responds to art notions relevant to specific settings (glocal art rootings) and integrates diverse knowledge bases. AiAR thus provides art practitioners with the tools needed to co-create liveable futures.

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Notes

1 The paradigm, Art in Action Research (AiAR), was developed as part of a theoretical study submitted as a doctoral thesis in Global and Area Studies at the Humboldt University zu Berlin in 2021

2 See, e.g., https://aaa.org.hk/en/collections/search/library/negotiating-the-future-2017-asian-art-biennial-2017 [31 Oct 2022]; https://documenta-fifteen.de/ [31 Oct 2022].

3 Darian-Smith and McCarty (2017) call the "collective turn of the disciplines to engage with contemporary and historical processes of globalization" a "global turn" (2).

4 Lämmli 2022 (117–121).

5 See the UNESCO R&D webpage: "Studies have found that every dollar invested in R&D generates nearly two dollars in return. While the rate will vary, R&D is an important driver of economic growth." http://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/research-and-development [31 October 2022].

6 Note Powell & Snellman's (2004) definition of the knowledge economy: "We define the knowledge economy as production and services based on knowledge-intensive activities that contribute to an accelerated pace of technological and scientific advance as well as equally rapid obsolescence" (201).

7 Frascati Manual 2015. https://www.oecd.org/innovation/frascati-manual-2015-9789264239012-en.htm

8 Vienna Declaration on AR (n.d.). 2 pages. https://cultureactioneurope.org/news/vienna-declaration-on-artistic-research/

9 2018–2019: Expert workshops Art and Society; Boötes Academics Hong Kong. 2015: Conference Action Art. The Role of Artists and Art Strategies in Civic Empowerment and Transformation Processes. Zurich University of the Arts. 2014: Conference Art • Life • Technology. Swissnex India, Bangalore; co-organised with Srishti, Institute of Art, Design and Technology.

10 https://documenta-fifteen.de

11 Lämmli 2022 (77–158).

12 The term insider research is used when researchers conduct research in their professional environments, i.e., in communities of which they are also part.

13 For details, see Lämmli 2022 (176–183).

14 For further details, see Lämmli 2022 (176–183).

15 Orientation points, that is, helpful points that do not predefine research procedures and content.

CREATIVE CURATORIAL PRACTICE AS A MEANS OF REORIENTING DISPLAY TROPES IN MUSEUMS OF NATURAL HISTORY

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This paper provides a critical analysis of natural history museums and their display practices. It explores the contradictions inherent in the concept of "natural history" and the dominance over nature it implies. The paper argues that museums still promote authoritative classification and knowledge systems that reinforce hierarchical structures and colonial ideologies. The author, an artist-curator and printmaker, shares her experiences with three exhibitions that challenge traditional display methods. By disrupting linear progression, introducing complex interconnections, and emphasizing sensory experiences, the exhibitions aim to create alternative models of display that reflect the entangled and web-like nature of speciation. The goal is to move beyond colonial narratives and imagine new ways of representing and understanding the natural world within museum spaces.

Museums of natural history have become anachronisms, confounded by their very nomenclature. 'Natural history' is both a practice and a concept: the practice of labelling, collecting and naming and, implicitly, the concept of dominion over nature. There is a deep contradiction between the two: the study of nature is presented as an empirical, objective endeavour, while nature itself is historicised and absorbed into a cultural discourse. In the way that both Renaissance curiosity collections and colonial museums were a means of actualising power through object wealth and licensing the domination of the viewer over the object (Bennett 1995, 2004; Foucault 2002; Hooper-Greenhill 1992), the display of natural history cannot be separated from the ideological imperatives that drove and continue to drive the collection and organisation of nature – and the place of humans within it. Many museums of science and nature still valorise authoritative classification and forms of knowledge that promote progress and mastery over the environment (Jardine et al. 1997; Jordanova 1989), and while museums have over the past few decades begun to question their colonial inheritance and look at new ways of representing and displaying their collections, most have remained obdurate in their presentation of nature as untainted by cultural and ideological agendas.

When considering how these museums may be reframed, it is necessary to take into account not only the collections and their perhaps dubious histories of acquisition, but also the manner of their display: notably, the question of how assumptions implicit in this display work to inform or reinforce prejudices and biases. It is through display that the epistemic values of institutions are revealed, and it is the 'hidden' structures in the iconography of display that need to be exposed and reimagined if natural history museums are to move beyond colonial, imperialist understandings of the natural world.

As an artist-curator and printmaker, I have worked primarily with projects that look at the visual vocabulary of speciation, and particularly how this plays out in institutional spaces. While my research field is the history of representation in the biological and biomedical sciences, my practice is to interpret this through the making of objects and images that are presented as curated exhibitions. I am particularly interested in associative language, visual analogies and their persuasive power, and how these have fed discriminatory thinking. Central to this thinking is taxonomy. Taxonomies divide species by difference and similarity, placing them into discrete and distinct groups, ordered hierarchically. Coupled with this ordering system is the dominant icon of evolution, the 'tree of life' with its strong graphic syntax of progressive, ascendant linearity and branching divisions. Ernst Haeckel's various tree schemas produced between 1866 and 1879 are exemplars of this bias. Referring to them as *stammbäume* (genealogical trees or pedigrees), many were depicted as naturalistic botanical trees in which he positioned more complex species in the highest branches. His tree of 1876 traces a deliberate route from *monera* at the roots to *menschen* at the uppermost tips of the tree. The flawed relationship between notions of progress and understandings of evolution have been highlighted by Stephen Jay Gould (1987, 1989), who refers to an "iconography of expectation" and argues that all visualisations of evolution reinforce the notion of a "march of progress" and support a "comfortable view of inevitability and superiority" (Gould 1989, 28).[1] Natural history museums have always tended to endorse linear, hierarchical modes by presenting objects as discrete entities within temporal or spatial sequences. The visitor to these museums becomes complicit within a sequential articulation of species as they traverse a space that physically echoes a march of progress.

In contrast to the oppositional character of taxonomy, much current thinking sees speciation as relational and contingent on space and time. Lateral or horizontal gene transfer (HGT), observed particularly in microbes, suggests that species transfer genetic material between each other fairly regularly and that this is a fundamentally non-branching process, undermining the principle of vertical, hierarchical

inheritance (Zimmer 2008). As HGT[2] allows for the splicing of sections of genomes from other organisms, animals can become genotypically chimerical, and the ontology of species becomes unstable. This suggests not only that the space between species may be permeable, but that evolution is a tangled and weblike process rather than a strictly linear and chronological one. Doolittle's article "Uprooting the Tree of Life" in *Scientific American* (2000)[3] and Dagan and Martin's (2006) seminal article "Tree of One Percent," brought the debate of the analogical tree of life into the public arena. A new visual model was called for – a web of life.[4] In cladistic tree iconography, each branch or node has two finite objects, whereas in web or net evolutionary iconography, objects are more fluid and subject to reattribution and change. If biomedical visual culture is subjected to the same revisions, chains of established references are unravelled and objects and images can become ambiguous and multi-referential. My interest in curation in natural history museums has been prompted by these revisions and a search for an alternative visual model for display that mimics webness and taxonomic ambiguity. It is within these unexpected and unreliable relationships – the active place of association and the productive space of emergent ideas – that the entangled and web-like potential for museum display lies. Only when enlightenment structures are abandoned can the museum become associative and meaningful to its multiple audiences, as colonial narratives of progress are resisted and new orders imagined.[5]

This explosion of a linear form of display was tested in my three exhibitions at the Iziko South African Museum in Cape Town: *Subtle Thresholds: the visual taxonomies of disease* (2009–10), R-A-T: an associative ordering (2012–13), and *FREIGHTED: 500 years of rhinoceros collection and display* (2018–ongoing). Site of display is critical to the work. This museum, established in 1825, like many museums of natural history has a complicated display past that until recently included the hall of African Cultures. My exhibitions situated themselves self-consciously within this space as an act of insiderism that sought to critique the structures of display from within. While much Western science relies on evidentiary systems, art co-opts and inverts accepted systems for affect: the intention was to test how this act of curation could simultaneously absorb and interrupt the patterns of display and reception of information within a museum context.

Subtle Thresholds was an exhibition of prints, objects and collections, primarily concerned with the visual representation of infectious disease and specifically how the constructions of 'difference' and 'analogy' have been used to mediate the cultural understanding of pathology. It used a lattice of conceptual and visual cross-referencing to undermine an oppositional understanding of species and co-opted layering and repetition of form through visual 'hyperlinks' to expose the interconnectivity between organisms, worldviews and mythologies. Presented in a large gallery between social and natural history collections, it referred to zoonoses and the relationship between the social, cultural and scientific understanding of disease and speciation. The layout evoked a cosmology – a scattering that allowed for a sensorial apprehension of the material. The walls running on either side of the main hall were layered with objects and images, and in an attempt to undermine a linear reading of the exhibition, formats were repeated and overlayed in a complex visual filigree (Figure 1). A timeline in the form of a printed ruler circumscribed the entire exhibition area and included a biblical concordance of disease, literally running counter to a more conventional microbial history and marked in increments by lists of thousands of microbes. GPS co-ordinates enabled coded access to sites of outbreaks, paired with a world map of disease density in a proximate cabinet. Quatrefoil frames contained electron microscope images of animal excrement, thus faeces, the ultimate feared site of contamination, become wonderous, appealing landscapes for contemplation. Animal specimens were anthropomorphised, and only labelled with the zoonoses that they carry – by implication, being understood

through their disease. Comprehending the exhibition required active participation in the linking and cross-referencing of images and texts, and the contracted experience of complex reading within the exhibition was intended to influence the viewer's interpretation of consecutive exhibits (Figure 2).



Figure 1: *Subtle Thresholds: The Visual Taxonomies of Disease* (2009–10), Fritha Langerman. Iziko South African Museum in Cape Town. (detail)

R-A-T used *Rattus norvegicus* as a subject to explore the representation of species. The rat has been largely excluded from presentation in museums of natural history, and as an animal that is closely related to the development of human populations, it speaks as much to a cultural and social history as to a natural one. Rather than a discrete display, *R-A-T* was dispersed throughout the museum, furtively making its way into disused corners and cabinets. The interventions were designed specifically to relate to proximate exhibits and to shift the reading of those exhibits, making connections to mythologies, psychology, literature and popular culture. This aimed to undermine the display of specimens as isolated units that stand as exemplary visible components of a greater, hidden collection, and rather draw attention to the dense layers of cultural and social history that connect human and non-human animals. One example was a large cabinet in the 'World of Water' that responded to its proximate location to underwater displays, kelp forests, seals and a giant squid. It alluded to a space of imagination and dread as well as rational ordering: the realm of fantasy and psychology. In relation to the adjacent display of comparative seal skulls, stepped in an evocation of evolutionary progress, rodent skulls were presented on a flat, non-hierarchical surface surrounded by broken ladders – the scaffolding of an ascendant iconography of evolution (Figure 3). Behind this were chalkboard texts taken from the classification of *Rattus rattus* by Linneaus in 1758 and *Rattus norvegicus* by John Berkenhout in 1789. Included was a tower of large white books of rat fiction marked with library cards of academic texts on rats, and enormous simulated rat tails labelled with 'luggage tags' from the many ships that have arrived in Cape Town harbour over the past 350 years. Interpretations of seven rodent brains and one seal brain, based on those found at the Gallery of Paleontology and Comparative Anatomy in Paris, were presented upon a light box. They were surrounded by hundreds of specimen bottles, labelled with rat experiments, alluding to the estimation that an article based on rat research is published every minute. Behind these were texts taken from Skinner's survey of operant behaviour, and Freud's 'Ratman' notes on obsessional neurosis. In this way the porosity of the interface between human behaviour and rat research was emphasised. (Figure 4)



Figure 2: *Subtle Thresholds: The Visual Taxonomies of Disease* (2009–10), Fritha Langerman. Iziko South African Museum in Cape Town. (detail)



Figure 3: *R-A-T: An Associative Ordering* (2012–13), Fritha Langerman. Iziko South African Museum in Cape Town (detail)

FREIGHTED is a mobile exhibition that has been shown in natural history museums in Cape Town, Lisbon, Madrid and Leipzig. This project was sparked by my participation in an exhibition that celebrated 500 years of the image of Durer's rhino in 2015. I found the story of Ganda, the Indian rhinoceros, compelling and saddening. That this animal was shipped as a diplomatic gift from India to King Manuel in Lisbon and was gifted again to the Pope before drowning in the Mediterranean seemed symbolic of colonial conquest and the fragile bounty of empire. The narrative would resonate for the next 500 years in the collection of animals for museums, zoos, game hunting and poaching. Ganda was the first of many rhinos sent to Europe, and is paradigmatic of the thousands of specimens that have left the East and Africa for American and European collections since. In all cases, the passage of rhinos was a demonstration of colonial power and a measure of the control that coloniser countries exercised over the colonies and their inhabitants. The legacy of imperialism and the simultaneous exploitation of the natural environment can be seen throughout the twentieth century.[6] With this in mind, I planned a project in 2018 in which

I imagined the reverse journey of a rhino making its way back from Lisbon and Europe, around the Cape of Good Hope, ultimately returning to Goa. But this would be a specimen of absence: a travelling museum exhibit in the spirit of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century peripatetic animal exhibits, but with the main attraction a surrogate. The exhibition is housed within a pine rhino-sized packing crate that makes visual reference to an ark and early conceptions of the museum, designed to fit a small shipping container and be sent around the world by sea. It is divided into two symmetrical sections that allow for intimate viewing by one visitor at a time. (Figure 5). The interiors of the crates are lined with shallow, dense cabinets that contain objects, images and videos, encyclopaedic in nature . While the exhibit is comprehensive, it presents the rhinoceros in fragments and in ways that are unfamiliar. There are no 'authentic' objects from collections – everything is reproduced and replicated, making analogical reference to the absent rhinoceros and various extinction narratives. The rationale for the replica was Durer's initial print which includes the word "abconderfet" – as taken from the Latin *imago contrafacta*, meaning an accurate copy of an absent original – a copy that bears witness. Reproduction, especially to me as a printmaker, was thus an appropriate strategy with which to approach this exhibition. Prints were remade, skins, labels and documents meticulously copied, teeth and bones manufactured.[7] (Figure 6)



Figure 4: *R-A-T: An Associative Ordering* (2012–13), Fritha Langerman. Iziko South African Museum in Cape Town (detail)



Figure 5: *FREIGHTED: 500 Years of Rhinoceros Collection and Display* (2020), Fritha Langerman. National Museum of Natural Sciences, Madrid

My curatorial strategy within these projects has been to introduce overtly complex interconnective[8] and organisations of visual material, to liberate the display of speciation from its sequential constraints, and to present an alternative that is entangled, dense, complex and representative of contemporary web iconography. This was achieved by disrupting a linear progression through the display areas, fracturing components of displays, dislocating objects from their labels, undoing the narrative structure and textual reading, and forcing the spatial navigation of a dense matrix of connections. Although *Subtle Thresholds* was contained within a single gallery, *R-A-T* was spread throughout the museum, and *FREIGHTED* was contained within two crates, all three exhibitions relied on the disorientation and destabilisation of the viewer and the viewing experience to direct interpretation. Images and connections had to be mentally transported from one space to another in order to get any sense of a whole. Both the curatorship and experience of the exhibitions were web-like, making the viewer walk the exhibitions in either defined or dislocated spaces. None of the displays had obvious starting or termination points, thus effectively preventing any progressive, sequential experience of them. All were highly structured and complex projects, wherein small, contained units operated within internal systems of categorisation and cross-reference. A far remove from the structure of the tree, this is a model of speciation that is contingent on a random context, connected and rhizomatic.

Reading was rejected as the primary source of knowledge and the exhibitions invited the sensory as a site of meaning-making through association. In order to achieve this, the sheer volume of text had an asphyxiating and disorienting effect. The links between elements were often circular, returning viewers to a starting point and insisting that only through an investment in the visual would the exhibition be understood. In *Subtle Thresholds*, text was manifest in many forms: GPS co-ordinates on signage plates allow coded access to sites of outbreaks; Latin species names provide a veiled clue to SEM images of animal excrement; bacterial forms were hidden within steel renditions of pharmacological and demonic images; and handwritten 'chalk texts' reflected the personal, mythical and philosophical reading of the diseased body. *R-A-T* was even more reliant on the idea of the label

to be a carrier of meaning in itself. It was an exhibition of labels, referring both to a history of museum practice and to classification and naming as a potentially divisive political process. *FREIGHTED* similarly used collections of text and labels that are careful reproductions from original museum specimens, notebooks and texts.

All three exhibitions are encyclopaedic inventories – impossible and futile attempts to collect long lists. While the fragment has become an icon of contemporary art practice, set in opposition to the entirety of the Enlightenment list, in all of these exhibitions the list becomes a fragment and stands both as a reflection on museum practice and the museum experience.

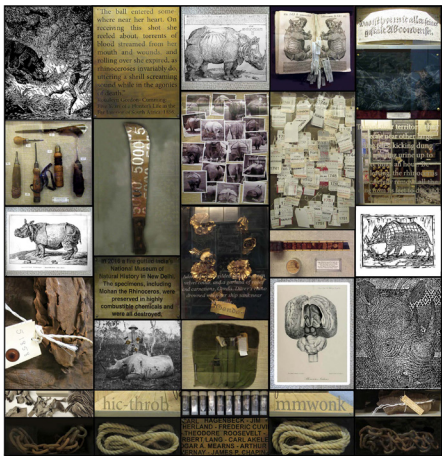


Figure 6: FREIGHTED: *500 Years of Rhinoceros Collection and Display* (2020), Fritha Langerman. National Museum of Natural Sciences, Madrid (detail)

A further strategy used was mirroring and reflection – a form of contagion and porosity, as the mirror is able to shift subject/object relations, making the viewer consciously complicit in the viewing experience. On the most obvious level, the viewer's reflection becomes part of what is viewed – a point of self-reflection – but more than that, the moving reflection introduces a temporality to the viewing experience, which can be changed by aspect and proximity. The mirror documents the journey of the walked passage through the museum.

Audience expectation within museums of natural history is, more often than not, that of a progressive narrative that has a defined starting and endpoint. Rather than meeting this expectation, if museums are to transcend their imperial origins, they will need to develop exhibits that are reflexive and responsive, presenting the natural world as contingent and entangled. Julian Spalding (2002, 22) alerts us to the important place of ignorance within museums and the need to emphasis what is not known, rather than what is. Doubt becomes a critical strategy as this uncertain space is one in which all participants can make a contribution. While museum displays have long been predicated on certainty, my practice suggests that by exploding what is known into a space of doubt, some fertile ground for dialogue will be generated. This is an alternative space of the imagination and the sensorium, where creative production is primary and understanding is not gleaned through empiricism. Artists and visual art have a role to play in interrupting expectation within these contexts and reshaping the often-passive interaction of the viewer within the museum.

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Notes

1. One of the most damaging images contributing to the public misconception of evolution has been Rudolf Zallinger's illustration for F. Clark Howell's 1965 book, Early Man. Here the linear movement from left to right, from crouching ape to ascendant white male is exemplary. It has arguably informed the public understanding of evolution ever since.
2. This process is genetically identifiable, although not evident in the phenotype. The chimerical aspect of mammals also relates to the idea, as expressed by Donna Haraway (2008, 4), that by virtue of hosting micro-organisms within the body, humans are a multispecies assemblage.
3. He argued that micro-organisms, which were the main inhabitants for at least two thirds of the planet's history, provide little information for defining relationships between species and constructing a clear family tree. In addition, lateral or horizontal gene transfer allows for the exchange of significant genes or suites of genes between micro-organisms; and this fundamentally shifts our understanding of linear, vertical inheritance. Doolittle also argued that two fundamental evolutionary processes, HGT and endosymbiotic gene transfer, must be taken into account when visualising the form of evolution (Doolittle 2000).
4. This finds similar footing in Deleuze and Guattari's writings of arborescence and rhizomatics. They identify the dominance of the tap and dichotomous root in most Western thinking – a lateral system that foregrounds progression (Deleuze and Guattari 1987).
5. Julia Marcus argues that the danger is that these exhibitions become increasingly opaque. In response to the Museum of Sydney (1995) with "its collage of quotations, its erasure of distinctions and the absence of evaluation" she argues that the erotics of the museum – that based on desire and looking – are lost when comprehension and evaluation are removed (Marcus 2000, 231). She calls this "reactionary nihilism" in that the absence of texts and primary reliance on aesthetics within display produces an "unreadable visual text" (Marcus 2000, 240). She argues that while this is an effective means of breaking up colonial narrative, it also denies access to to their past for those who most need it, instead presenting a fragmented equivalence that is ultimately conservative.
6. The 1909 Smithsonian–Roosevelt African Expedition alone collected 11 500 specimens, including 11 black and 9 white rhinos. Throughout the 20th century, elephants and rhinos were the currency that supported civil wars, significantly in the DRC and Angola, where the stockpiling of elephant tusks and rhino horns used to support the Angolan war decimated the wildlife in the area. Poaching too, is never a simple binary, but a complex set of global machinations that facilitate the trade in horns.
7. See the exhibition website: https://www.freightedexhibition.co.za/.
8. The links between themes in the cases, are for example: CJ RHODES, implicated in South Africa's brutal colonial past, and his commission to hunt some of the last northern white rhinos north of the Zambezi, donated to the SA Museum in 1895; the April 2008 theft of the horn of Rhodes' rhino from the South African museum; the so called "Dead zoo gang," the fourteen men convicted in 2016 of plotting to steal rhino horn and Chinese artefacts worth up to £57 million – documented in stool sample vials; and a collection of rhinoceros excrement in sample vials.

A RETURN TO PRACTICES AND PEDAGOGIES: ARTISTIC RESEARCH AS UNTETHERING AND FORAGING

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This paper reflects on the intertwining of artistic research and pedagogies within the context of a collaborative project conducted at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. The authors explore the concepts of proximities, grids and flows, confrontations, and time as entry points into the space of artistic research. They emphasize the importance of untethering and foraging, challenging established boundaries and embracing discomfort as a catalyst for creative growth. The paper also highlights the significance of proximities and the relational aspect of artistic research, inviting a communal and interdisciplinary approach. The authors reflect on their experiences during the pandemic and the evolving nature of teaching and learning in relation to time.

Introduction

In January 2020 we presented a joint paper-conversation that emerged from the process of conducting (Barry) and supervising (Andrew) an MA Fine Arts research project in 2019 in the School of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. In the paper-conversation we reflected on practices and pedagogies and the place of desire in these processes. The 2020 presentation anticipated the focus of the 2022 conference by focusing on how artistic research informs pedagogies and how pedagogies inform artistic research. In this nexus ,we tried to understand desire as a generative presence in several ways. Our collaboration is grounded in a shared interest in practices that understand the affordances of multimodal situatedness as a perpetual openness to the motile, a space of motion that is as spontaneous as it is deliberate and often digressionary. Simultaneously, our collaboration is about the serious play in the intersecting spaces of enquiry and knowledge production and, importantly, those spaces beyond the academy. Our ongoing collaboration is an example of the heightened pedagogy-practice relationship we seek to imagine more broadly.



Figure 1: Hedwig Barry and David Andrew in conversation, Arts Research Africa International Conference, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa (January 2020)

In the 2020 paper, we focused on what we understood to be the digressionary trajectories of the supervisory process and its diverse methodological groundings. At the same time, we were committed to understanding the nature of artistic research within specific contexts and the kind of rigour present in this form of research – a rigour that often follows a logic unlike that informing other disciplines (Maharaj 2009) and that may be incommensurable with those established in the Global North and the westernised university (Grosfoguel et al. 2016). We considered how an aim might be something that emerges through process rather than being distinctly present at the outset. And we imagined pedagogical spaces that were embodied (Stein 2007, Spatz 2015) and capable of entertaining desires (Bal 2002), the erotic and love (hooks 2000). Active metaphors embedded in Barry's practice, such as untethering and foraging, were foregrounded in the research and supervision, in conversation with ideas of proximity, confrontation, grids and flows and time.



Figure 2: Hedwig Barry, NIROX Foundation Sculpture Park, Gauteng, South Africa (2022)

During the pandemic period (2020–22), both of us continued to practice. Barry began to prepare for PhD studies and completed residencies at the NIROX Foundation Sculpture Park (December 2021–March 2022) and at the Debeden Research Centre located at the Tswalu Nature Reserve (May–August 2022). These residencies included some form of teaching activity.



Figure 3: Hedwig Barry, Debeden Research Centre, Tswalu Nature Reserve, Northern Cape, South Africa (2022)

Andrew continued to supervise, teach, research and make. The supervision included PhD creative research projects that explored notions of paradise in a late capitalist world, the re-orienting of human-oceanic relations, thinking with stone in a post-extractive Johannesburg landscape, and radical understandings of embodied techniques in contemporary South African dance. Each of these projects involved the student working with a supervisory team in a way that enabled motile possibilities for methods of untethering and foraging to emerge. The supervision also contributed to Andrew's ongoing thinking on artistic research practices and pedagogy. Concurrently, Andrew's drawing practice returned to the *Provoking the Avalanche* series initiated in Sierre, Switzerland, in 2003 and continued until 2009.

The presence of the avalanche as a pedagogical and socio-political emblem became a site of theorising through the making process, similar to Barry's theorising of ground/lessness and grids and flows in her works on paper. In these works, Barry

builds up finely layered linear elements to create a surface akin to a loose weave of material that is then interrupted by more curvilinear elements that roam across and through the lightly held grid.

The 2022 conference presentation afforded us the opportunity to reflect anew on artistic research and pedagogies. In the discussion that follows, we treat confrontations and proximities as generative nodes or presences in our respective practices. Importantly, we understand pedagogical work as practice. As we noted in 2020, the intertwining – through, in that instance, the mediums of filmic and painting installation – of pedagogies, practices and desires, enabled a shift in how the spaces of teaching and learning were understood, whether in the classroom or in less formal spaces. We draw together two conference experiences in returning to Mieke Bal's appreciation of the qualities necessary for teaching; to quote from our 2020 paper-conversation:

A teacher needs to know how not to know. I am a teacher. One of the joys of that profession is literally to see thought emerge into clarity and shed its initial fuzziness … the proximity, indeed, the intimacy of a person, the student, struggling with thoughts struggling to have her think them, to recall Bollas' "unthought known," of a person skilled and knowing not to know, is an eminently fertile situation for the combination of creativity and interaction that distinctively characterises cultural analysis. (2002, 286–287)

It is in this space of the "[needing] how not to know" that we have continued to explore what it means to work as artists, researchers and educators over the last two years. Through our reflection on the intertwining of pedagogies and artistic research, we have identified four concepts for the purposes of this paper around which our thoughts continue to gather, pause and disperse:

1. Proximities
2. Grids and flows
3. Confrontations
4. Time

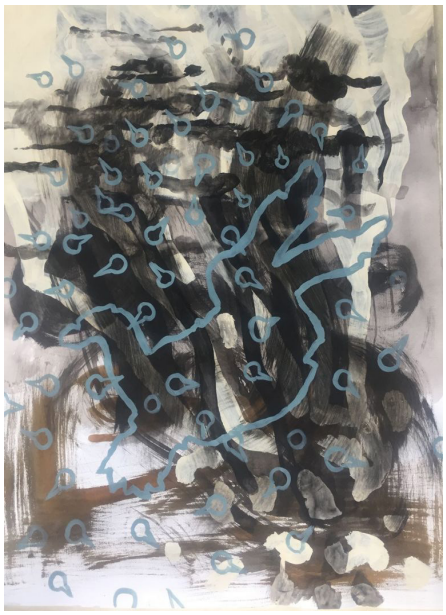


Figure 4: David Andrew, *Making Sense of Small Things – Provoking the Avalanche No.18*, mixed media on Fabriano paper, 100cm x 70cm (2020)



Figure 5: Hedwig Barry, *Grid II*, pencil and ink on Fabriano paper, 28cm x 19cm (2022)

We engage with these concepts and the notions of untethering and foraging to address a question to which we return in this paper, namely: What is it that we are able to learn and understand from and about artistic research? The four concepts are less methodological anchors and more entry points into the space of oscillation and rupture that characterises artistic research. They appear as threads present in our ongoing collaboration that we are now able to recognise more readily. Importantly, we can see more clearly how and when they manifest as digressionary moments, for it is in heightened awareness and openness to such moments that we become more receptive to emergent possibilities. In this space of critical reflection our practices of teaching, researching and making pose further questions for us; they look back at us in the closest of proximities to confront and challenge.

1. Proximities

Barry's foraging methodologies have led her to Jean-Luc Nancy's notion of "being with" (2000), a relational understanding that encompasses singular-plural becoming and being. Foraging of this kind proceeds from a post-human instinct that man-

dates an intimacy with the becoming of an environment. Barry's 2022 residency at the Tswalu Nature Reserve allowed her to reflect on how her research practices were intertwined with contexts afforded by being in relation to a *being with* data, method, weather, researchers, herself, nature, environment, conservation, practice and animals. Such dialogical opportunities for being with are about a nearness in space, time and relationship that is a form of community enabling a certain motility integral to artistic research as a pedagogy and a practice. In thinking through the lens of proximity we ask ourselves how artistic research practices inform pedagogies and pedagogical spaces and vice versa, enabling us to theorise and practice in a much more irreverent way, while remaining open to bell hooks's exhortation: "[t]o truly love we must learn to mix various ingredients: care, affection, recognition, respect, commitment and trust as well as honest and open communication" (2000, 30).



Figure 6: Hedwig Barry, workshop with scientists and researchers, Dedeben Research Centre, Tswalu Nature Reserve, Northern Cape, South Africa (2019)

In the interlocutory spaces of artistic research and teaching and learning, the process is often about listening; it is about understanding the premise of the enquiry, the research, and where the interest is (leaning towards). Then there is always the period of allowing interlocutors to untether from constraints, imagined or real, and to extend their imaginations. Particularly in creative research, the inclination to untether and to forage *with* is a primary impulse for us. It can introduce spaces of discomfort and incommensurability (a space of not recognising something, of having to recalibrate one's sensibilities). And just as much as proximity happens in an infinity of different ways, no two student-supervisor processes or instances of artistic research are the same.

2. Grids and flows

The institution is grid-like to some, perhaps many. And, in several respects, the higher degree process has a grid-like existence, although artistic research practices render the grid more pliable, more mutable, encouraging the grid lines to dissolve at certain points and allow what is untethered to flow outside. The (partial) dissolution of boundaries introduces the interlocutors to spaces of not knowing. To have the inclination and capacity (and encouragement) to forage in the spaces of not knowing is not an antidote to discomfort. It rather enables an understanding of discomfort as explicated in Sara Ahmed's invitation to her readers to consider that "[d]iscomfort … allows things to move. Every experience I have had of pleasure and excitement about a world opening up has begun with such ordinary feelings of discomfort; of not quite fitting in a chair, of becoming unseated, of being left holding onto the ground" (2006, 154). Understanding the grid and its receptivity to flow in this way enables a recognition of and a working with discomfort. In the untethering, the flow is precipitated and one creates one's own structural system – something grid-like but not bound by the logic of the grid – that is not constrained to a structure of orthodoxy (Maharaj 2009). We often associate untethering with the acts of foraging, an openness to a wide-ranging connecting with what may cohere but also disrupt. This encapsulates a certain hedging of bets or entertaining of multiple possibilities as an artist-researcher-supervisor-educator. There is something about sifting, changing and adapting as a forager. This is exemplified in Barry's ever-present foraging tables and notebooks – gatherings of objects, notes, miscellanea – that in a fashion similar to her drawings, signal a grid of sorts, but one that is permeable and motile.

3. Confrontations



Figure 7: Hedwig Barry, foraging table in artist's studio, NIROX Sculpture Park, Gauteng, South Africa (2022)

Barry thinks about untethering in two ways: her first visit to the Tswalu Nature Reserve Research Centre in 2019 involved, in part, confronting scientists with the proposition: "If we untether your research from the systems that are present, what affordances emerge?" Barry's sense was that scientific researchers remained within very strict parameters for extended periods of time before they felt they could explore in more speculative or imaginative ways. Such an observation is not a dismissal of these internal logics and methodologies, but rather reflects a meshing of profound respect for these often repetitive, iterative processes and an invitation to dare to embrace inter/multi/trans/post-disciplinarity perspectives, to enable a more communal prompting and an untethering of methodologies and data (even momentarily), to be in a space of not knowing. And a not knowing together, where negotiation and mixing are present.

The second way is in the imagining of a becoming of sorts – a living entity, being confined and constrained. With the removal of the constraint, untethering is possible. This is not to say that constraints are necessarily bad – it is more about understanding the limits and affordances of constraints and what lies beyond these constraints. Confrontation may conduce to the most extraordinary discoveries, but it can also mean stepping back and pausing. Understanding the discomfort present in a state of confrontation induced by that which is unfamiliar is, for Barry, about not looking away. Returning to Barry's residency at the Tswalu Nature Reserve, a compulsion present in her multiple practices was to engage in relationship building rather than in only making artworks. She reflects on being an artist interloper whose practice is about creating a space of immersion for herself and for the researchers based at the research centre. The method was one of placing herself purposefully in a space of discomfort, a place of unfamiliarity.



Figure 8: Hedwig Barry, foraging table in artist's studio, Dedeben Research Centre, Tswalu Nature Reserve, Northern Cape, South Africa (2022)

In our pedagogical practices, we often reserve space for irreverence, disobedience and even disaffection. There is a great deal in Barry's practice that is premised on forms of mischief and disobedience. This is in part a reaction to her own experiences of formal education, where conformity and adherence to a grid-like imposition of rules and norms were required. Understanding her situated practices, a key principle of multimodal theory, and the resources that someone brings, including pedagogical resources, some not recognised by the student, are key in the interlocutory supervisory practice we imagine. What are the pedagogies that are part of the situated practices that are brought to artistic research? Some of these may be quite damaging pedagogies, but they unwittingly encourage disobedience.

The institutional hierarchy that places the supervisor above the student is ever-present. But we allow for these hierarchies to be interchangeable, where at times the supervisor is the learner – for instance, when the researcher/student can own and speak back to their own material. Maybe a capacity to confront hierarchies in a more nuanced way enables a different kind of proximity located in trust and vulnerability.

4. Time

One of the things that teaching and supervising under pandemic conditions asked us to consider is the relationship of time to learning and practice more broadly. Often teaching and learning is premised on having a number of students and a timetabled period of time with material content and/or processes that need to be

covered in this time. While we understand the need for some degree of efficient utilisation of time and associated resources, it became clear that there was a need to be more alert to a different kind of rhythm and receptivity to duration. Andrew has always been interested in how a more relational aesthetics demanded a durational engagement (e.g. so-called durational artworks). He has always been sceptical and suspicious of artworks that "parachute in," as opposed to artworks that are perhaps lower profile but are present for weeks, months, years. If you consider the classroom as a work of art (understood in a multiplicity of ways), the modality is necessarily durational. It is not always a space of comfort. It is sometimes a difficult, incommensurable space. But it is a space in which that incommensurability can be navigated, where solutions are not paramount and a measure of playing out can be entertained.



Figure 9: Researchers and scientists field work, Tswalu Nature Reserve, Northern Cape, South Africa

In his introduction to *Decolonizing the Westernized University*, Ernesto Velasquez refers to the work of Nassim Noroozi who, writing on the "pedagogy of time," argues that:

> this endeavor – what she calls pedagogy of time – aims to disrupt what regulates students' and readers' economies of knowledge without appointing conclusive end points for this disruption. Pedagogy of time does not aim for oversimplified and hurried theoretical reflections. As such, it is committed to critically confront politics of speed in thinking. (Velasquez 2016, xiv)

In our experience, artistic research practice diffracts, meanders and digresses, not following a linear trajectory in time or in learning, and seeks to accommodate the deepening and slowing down described by Noroozi. We are interested in how this understanding speaks to teaching and learning, including supervision. We ask how the premise of artistic research as imagined in this paper is enacted in teaching and learning and supervision, and we conclude that the supervision of creative practice higher degrees invites an increase in proximity and intimacy, being-with. This would seem to demand a different conception of time, one that acknowledges that "the idea of time as uniform succession needs to be opposed 'in the name of a time which is reversible, intermittent, episodic, various and variable, pluriform, relative, relational, and, importantly, finite'" (Beech et al. 2016, 8). In an issue that the PARSE Journal devoted to scrutinising time in the practices of artists, the editors note how "[a]rtists across disciplines have the advantage of shuffling, overcoming, undermining, fictionalising time" (Beech et al. 2016, 11). These are descriptors that we find useful in understanding how artistic research and pedagogies work together.



Figure 10: David Andrew, installation from the *Misc (Recovery Room)* exhibition at the Standard Bank Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa (2009)

Thoughts from the Untethered Foraging Table

As a conclusion of sorts, we return to one of Barry's foraging tables, an inevitable presence in the many studio/work spaces she creates in what is often a necessarily peripatetic practice. We invite the reader to imagine such a foraging table as a mixture of objects and as what Andrew refers to as dispositions. His ongoing artistic research interests lie in the nexuses of pedagogies and practice. He has referred to a dispositional set as a requirement for the teaching and learning space to become an artwork (Andrew 2011). He lists the following as dispositions:

Less anxious creativity
Make shifting
A leaning towards

Ambulatory thinking and acting
Embodied reflection
Playfulness
Risk-taking and rules
Awareness of affordance
Situated practices and
Making public.
(2011, 205)

Andrew argues that this dispositional set as a presence in the classroom as work of art (Guattari 1996) allows students to theorise and practice in more irreverent ways.

But perhaps what is absent is the necessary confrontation that recognises the incommensurable as being integral to the durational processes imagined and experienced. It is in such practice and pedagogy that Barry's attraction to the motile possibilities in methods of untethering and foraging can find expression. Teaching, making, researching flow together inseparably.

The receptivity to digressionary openness that we characterise above is directly related to Barry's interest in the formal and conceptual presence of what she refers to as "the margin for error" (Barry 2020). In our conversations, we have often referenced Carmen Mörsch's letter titled "Take the Terror out of Error" (2009), which draws on the work of queer theorists Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Patty Lather. We like to think of entertaining "the margin for error" as a further delighting in and extension of the injunction to take the terror out of error. Barry's interest in the margin for error as a visual trope stems from her work at the Tswalu Nature Reserve Research Centre where she often thought through the notion of the margin for error in research with scientists. Barry's compulsion has always been to keep her practice open to all interlocutors (see earlier reference to the notion of "being with"), an openness that lies at the heart of her regard for the value of research that is inter/trans/multi and post-disciplinary. The literal, visual margins in Barry's work take on a presence akin to something more adjustable – the more malleable line of the grid noted above, that allows for flow. Or the weave of a carpet inclined towards unravelling. The margin for error finds itself as a visual and physical presence in her drawings and sculptural installations, most notably, *Love Letter for the Lost Travellers* (2021), where a prominent red vertical line positions itself on the left side of the installation. While it asserts itself on the wall of the location for this outdoor public piece, it also becomes emblematic of spaces of tension where a spectrum of proximities and confrontations is present. In this spectrum of proximities and confrontations, artistic research asserts itself as pedagogy and practice.

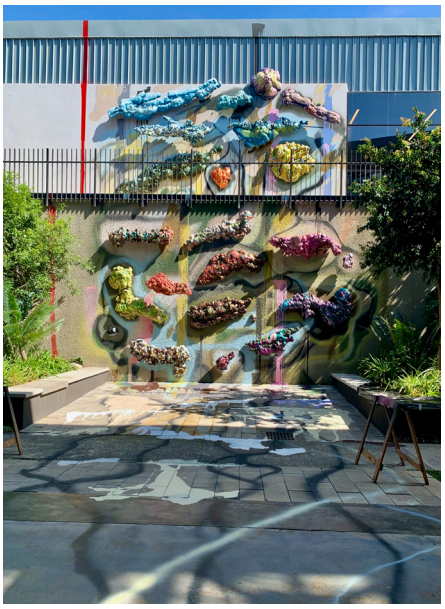


Figure 11: Hedwig Barry, *Love Letter for the Lost Travellers*, mixed media installation, dimensions variable, BMW Midrand Campus, Gauteng, South Africa (2021)

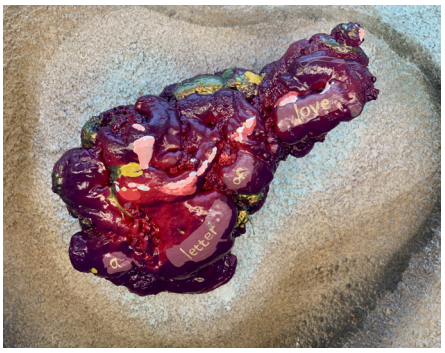


Figure 12: Hedwig Barry, *Love Letter for the Lost Travellers*, detail, mixed media installation, dimensions variable, BMW Midrand Campus, Gauteng, South Africa (2021)

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ARCHIVING AS ARTISTIC PRACTICE

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This paper looks at the development of an online showcase repository for the ReTAGS (Reimagining Tragedy from Africa and the Global South) practice-as-research artistic productions, *Antigone (not quite/quiet)* and *iKrele leChiza*, and the methodology behind documenting and digitally archiving their processes. The paper reflects on the author's involvement as the digital archivist for the ReTAGS research and the choices made and implemented on the online showcase repository. It considers the strengths and challenges of these archival choices and explores the possibilities of understanding the archive as a means of artistic engagement in its own right.

Introduction

With significant recent developments[1] in practice as research (PaR) in South African academic spaces, it would be remiss to exclude discussing *how* we are documenting the practice, and in turn recognising that archiving is indeed an artistic practice that builds its own performative presence. I am therefore grateful to have been selected to present my work at the ARA2022 Conference.[2]

I will focus specifically on the work I have been involved with in developing my practice of archiving for the Reimagining Tragedy from Africa and the Global South (ReTAGS) research, led by Professor Mark Fleishman at the Centre for Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies at the University of Cape Town (UCT). My paper will explore the methodology behind documenting and archiving the two ReTAGS practice-as-research artistic productions, *Antigone (not quite/quiet)* and *iKrele leChiza*, and the development of a digital showcase repository.

ReTAGS Context

ReTAGS is an exciting five-year research project that, according to Fleishman's concept proposal (2019), proposes to take the concept of tragedy from the very beginnings of theatre in its European manifestation, and to reimagine it from a perspective in Africa that is at once directed at the complex challenges of our global postcolonial present and towards our possible futures both inside and outside of the theatre discipline.

The project seeks to "create space for an extended interrogation of [the] vast body of tragic works produced in the theatres of Africa" (Fleishman 2019) and from the greater global South. Furthermore, it uses performance methodologies as analytical tools to gain insight into the complex realities of the neo-colonial aftermath by investigating current events in the postcolony beyond the theatre, through the lens of tragedy. Relevant to the context of this paper, the project will produce three artistic outputs as research investigations of tragedy/the tragic, while making an attempt to consolidate and advance thinking on the role of art practice as a research methodology – in a discipline that until now has been "focused in specific geographical domains mostly in the global North" (Fleishman 2019).

Antigone (not quite/quiet), produced in 2019 under the direction of Mark Fleishman, was the first artistic research production. The second was Mandla Mbothwe's, *iKrele leChiza* (The Sword of the Herb), which was produced in 2021, but because of the COVID-19 pandemic was only staged in 2022. In 2023, the project will mount its third and final artistic research production, *Oedipus at Colonus: #aftersophocles*, directed once again by Fleishman.

Living Archive

Until recently, the dominant concern in archiving theatre has been capturing the "final" creative product in forms such as video recordings, photographs, programmes and reviews of the performance. Rarely has there been a focus on extensively capturing the process that leads to that creative product, or indeed the development of "a common or systematic practice" (Ronfard et al. 2015, 1) to capture exhaustive rehearsal footage. However, with the ongoing development of practice as research, where researchers place a greater emphasis on questioning and interrogating the process of artistic creation, how do we begin systematically to capture the process as a method of data collection? What is the data generated on the rehearsal floor? What datasets are we building in a creative process? And could these datasets be utilised by other academic fields to generate further knowledge?

I was hired towards the end of 2019 to document the six-week rehearsal process of *Antigone* (*not quite/quiet*);[3] the nature and extent of the capturing to be undertaken, however, was undetermined. The only known requirement for the documentation process was that the footage could be used alongside the five-year longitudinal study and the other future PaR artistic productions, in order to analyse the questions posed by the ReTAGS project. The process-dependent nature of the ReTAGS research meant that I was to be working with a living archive, best described by media and communications scholar Dr Amalia Sabiescu as the "practices and environments that connect the organisation, curation and transmission of memory with present-bound creative, performative, and participatory processes" (2020). Sabiescu further elaborates on developments "in the democratisation of arts and cultural heritage and the advent of digital media [that] have provided living archives with new creative valences, making them potent means for the performative celebration of the past through contemporary acts of creation and transmission" (2020). This explanation leads us away from the colonial understanding of archives as static, "dormant, disembodied narratives of a dominant culture" (Malmö University n.d.) towards the notion of the postcolonial archive as an agent active in transforming and shaping history and its narratives. This understanding of the ability of the living archive to actively generate narratives strongly influenced my approach to filming the rehearsal process of the first ReTAGS artistic research production. In this regard, I became less worried about what I was recording and more concerned about what I was *not* recording.

Capturing the Process as a Method of Data Collection

Academic and anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995, 26) warns of four crucial points in history-making where narratives can either be silenced or allowed to pass into historical production. These are: "the moments of fact creation (the making of sources); the moment of fact assembly (the making of archives); the moment of fact retrieval (the making of narratives); and the moment of retrospective significance (the making of history in the final instance)."

I was initially wary of silencing any narratives or imposing my own (by selecting what to film). Consequently, I decided to record everything on the rehearsal day, from a static position in the rehearsal room with a wide-angle shot, to avoid even panning the camera and thereby omitting to film the less-obvious events unfolding in the room. I also placed an audio recorder on the floor or a chair, closer to the performers, considering that perhaps a different medium of recording might capture an interesting alternative quality or affective experience for interpreting the spoken or sung text without seeing the visuals. Of course, we could choose to philosophise as to whether it is even possible for a camera to capture everything, and question whether the nuances of an embodied, affective process on the rehearsal floor include unobservable forces and structures that cannot be recorded. Another pertinent question that arises is whether those observed in the documented rehearsal process, in this instance the performers and creative collaborators, would have been or behaved differently as in an undocumented rehearsal process?

While I was attempting to capture all that I could on video and audio, I was also trying to mitigate the potential for people to perform for the camera through my choice of an unobtrusive set-up. At the same time, I was trying to remove myself from the narrative, by never stepping into frame, never having my voice captured on any recording device or having the artists acknowledge my presence on camera. I was purposefully attempting to silence myself out of the archive altogether, in the hopes of producing an objective documentation of the rehearsal process. I was satisfied with my attempts at "perceived absence" in capturing the rehearsals in the

first two moments of historical production, that of fact creation and fact assembly. However, this unravelled when it came to capturing the metadata, especially regarding keywording the video and audio footage.

Data(set) Generated on the Rehearsal Floor

Systematically capturing every rehearsal in the six-week process led to the collection of 1.8 TB of data, which included the above-mentioned documented video and audio footage, still images taken by photographers, rehearsal schedules, texts generated, digital audio-visual material used in the production, costume and stage design illustrations and related press material. To keep track of all the data generated, comprehensive spreadsheets[4] had to be developed and manually populated with metadata; specifically to navigate the hours of video and audio recordings, a dataset that at times I thought only I would ever access in its entirety. In this regard, keywording or tagging presented itself as a crucial piece of metadata because it enables others to access and navigate their way through the archive of material. Ultimately, their journey is constructed by the archivist's ability to identify and categorise moments on the rehearsal floor and summarise them in comprehensible keywords. It was in this "historical production … moment of fact retrieval" (Trouillot) that I realised it was not possible to be a disembodied archivist, objective and invisible. I retroactively acknowledged that my presence in shaping the archive perceptibly remained even in my perceived physical absence. In 2021 and 2022 with *iKrele leChiza*, this historical production moment became even more pronounced, when in an isiXhosa-dominated rehearsal space I was unable to identify nuanced thematic keywords and consequently produced a less rich dataset.[5] *iKrele leChiza* was also led by a different director and understandably presented a different rehearsal process: rehearsal schedules would shift continually, many of the conversations around the creative ideas happened after hours between cast members, and there was a vibrant Whatsapp group where ideas and opinions were constantly exchanged. This PaR production also deviated[6] in direction from the first, by drawing heavily on visual design elements, movement vocabularies and metaphysical references from the archive of Mbothwe's creative repertoire.[7] This created a wonderful speaking back to a theatrical archive of the past, to generate new material in the present and feed the expanding living archive of ReTAGS. As the archivist I therefore needed constantly to make adjustments to my forms of capturing and become more flexible to the needs of the rehearsal space and the process of the individual director.

In this way, it came to seem naïve to think of the archivist as external to the creative process. Despite being almost invisible, their role is integral as they are responsible for how the memories and narratives will be captured and showcased in perpetuity. Indeed, not only are they a part of the process, but they also need to develop a practice that I would argue is artistic in nature. If the creative act of storytelling can be understood as "organizing the three worlds of history, imagination, and audience into a semblance of unity" (Scheub 1996, 57), is not the archive then a storyteller, a performer; with the archivist akin to the director? Like the director, the archivist constantly needs to be making decisions to answer questions like: What am I keeping in or out of the final product? How am I deciding to frame/contextualise this moment? How am I communicating this and presenting it to an "audience"? In this scenario, the audience consists of online users who are engaging with the showcase repository. To this extent, being on the rehearsal floor, from the first historical production moment of fact creation, the archivist holds subjectivity and agency, and can no longer be understood, according to the philosopher Robin George Collingwood, as merely "a 'passive' keeper of 'documentary residue' but rather [an] active shaper of … archival heritage" (cited in Griffiths 2017, 273). As an archivist privileged

to be embedded in the research and the history-making of two PaR productions, I still do not have a satisfactory solution to the question of the best methodology to approach capturing the rehearsal footage. While I continue to resist capturing close-ups or only certain moments or sections of rehearsals, acknowledging that I am not invisible in the archive, I still do not wish to assume active artistic authorship in the first stages of fact creation. I prefer the archival artistic practice to be revealed in showcasing the data generated on the rehearsal floor.

Showcasing the Rehearsal Dataset as a Digital Archive

I have described how, as an embedded archivist, I am responsible for developing, maintaining and curating the ReTAGS archive. I have also suggested how these responsibilities required my becoming creatively intertwined with the archival project. I would now like to discuss the process involved in producing the ReTAGS online showcase repository.[8] This process entailed merging the artistic knowledge produced on the rehearsal floor with the digital humanities practices of ensuring that the data produced accords with the digital principles of making data F.A.I.R. (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable). The digital showcasing objectives of presenting a living archive, as outlined by the *Living Archives*[9] research project run by Malmö University in Sweden, are centred around "enhancing the role of the public archive by performing memory, open data access and participatory design" (Malmö University n.d.). Digital showcasing also involves an investigation into "how digital archives for cultural heritage can become social resources, facilitate social change, create cultural awareness and collective collaboration" (Malmö University n.d.).

The ReTAGS showcase repository is built on the web publishing platform called Omeka S,[10] an exhibition tool for the GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums) sector to showcase Digital Collections. Omeka S brands itself as "a next-generation web publishing platform for institutions interested in connecting digital cultural heritage collections with other resources online" (Omeka S n.d.) The 'S' in Omeka S stands for "semantic," "as in connecting to the semantic web, where data in web pages is structured and tagged" (Batzofin and Muftić 2022). Its primary focus is on organising elements of a collection such that the links between items and the greater elements of the internet are strengthened, allowing for more precise searches and deeper explorations. These links can be made through categories such as performer, keyword, rehearsal day, venue, Greek Tragic text, etc. Currently on the ReTAGS site, all aspects of the research are being housed in the repository: field interviews, public presentations, archival productions of global South theatre productions based on classic Greek texts, as well as artistic research productions.[11]

Datasets Generating Further Knowledge

One of the other useful tools of Omeka S is that it allows the archive to be interactive; it is not merely a presentation of digital objects. Just as a theatre director works collaboratively in a workshopped theatre production, so too as an archivist do I wish to work collaboratively with a wider global community. Omeka S provides options for those visiting to talk back to the archive, through the use of comments and submission forms to add to and/or to clarify any aspect of the archive. In this way, the digital datasets that have been captured and showcased are part of an ever-expanding, living archive, with the flexibility of the digital space decentring the notion of the archivist as a singular entity and distributing the role among a community of digital citizens. The notion of this potential community as an archivist's audience is

taken further by the design researcher Laurene Vaughan (2016, 59), who thought-provokingly compares the digital community to the live performers themselves:

> The live performer in this context is not the person on stage, but the archive user who controls the keyboard and the mouse. The actions of their searching and viewing, collecting and narrating are their modes of performance [...] these practices enliven the material of the archive through actions of use.

For example, the PaR rehearsal material can be accessed in a multitude of ways, depending on who is engaging with it and what they are interested in researching/discovering; each time different narratives will be constructed. Since the material is under a creative commons licence[12] it can be reused and repurposed. The aim of producing and expanding on such a rich and open-access source of comprehensive datasets is the hope of broadening the extent to which critical engagement and interrogation can promote academic research across any sector of the Humanities. This is one of the research objectives ReTAGS desires to achieve, in setting a precedent for expansive possibilities of using performance practice-based research in producing and publishing academically rigorous data.

Conclusion

Just as with developing any artistic practice, there is in this context a necessary process of exploration, trial and error, revision, and re-exploration. My first attempt at curating and archiving *Antigone* (*not quite/quiet)* was about laying the foundational groundwork for my thinking about archiving the performing arts and imagining the multitude of ways of capturing the ephemeral aspects of its nature. With *iKrele leChiza*, I could test out those ideas once again and create a comparative analysis of my process, interrogating how the methodologies succeeded or failed on another rehearsal floor, while also becoming more flexible and responsive to the needs of a different rehearsal process. With the third artistic research production, *Oedipus at Colonus: #aftersophocles*, I will have another opportunity to explore my artistic process and make adjustments, while also retroactively revisiting the entire archive to update, improve and enrich the metadata. I am excited about working with the five-year longitudinal dataset for the ReTAGS research and seeing how I can deepen my artistic exploration of presenting the archive to an external audience.

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Notes

1. See Baxter (2013), Mäkelä and Farber (2011) and Stewart (2021).
2. An edited recording of this paper presentation can be accessed via UCT's open data repository *Zivahub*. Batzofin, Jayne. *Archiving as Artistic Practice*. University of Cape Town. Media, 2022. https://doi.org/10.25375/uct.21360921.v1.
3. I am a trained Theatre Director and Stage and Costume Designer by profession. This employment opportunity was my first professional foray into archiving.
4. The spreadsheets were populated with detailed information, capturing date of the rehearsal, where it was recorded, the duration of the audio/visual clip, a description of what was happening, who was in it, who led the rehearsal, keywords, any references made to other works or artists, permission to publish, etc.
5. This consideration also indicates the danger of working with the archivist as a singular entity to capture and preserve multilingual, multicultural means of expression; recourse for potentially addressing this shortfall will be addressed later in the paper.
6. I had access to this Whatsapp group and have captured the conversations and images in a word document, with audio files being saved in a separate folder. As a result of most of the conversations being in isiXhosa, I have chosen to keep the document private until such time as it can be translated, and an informed choice can be made as to whether it should be published.
7. Notably referenced in the rehearsal was Mbothwe's *Inxeba Lomphilisi* (Wound of a Healer) and *Ingdwaba Lendoda Lise Cankwe Ndlela* (The Grave of the Man is Next to the Road).
8. https://ibali.uct.ac.za/s/RETAGS/page/home.
9. The official title of the project is *Living Archives: Enhancing the Role of the Public Archive by Performing Memory, Open Data Access, and Participatory Design*. This research project was funded by the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet) and run by Malmö University, led by Prof. Susan Kozel.
10. UCT have renamed the publishing platform Ibali, the isiXhosa word for "story."
11. https://ibali.uct.ac.za/s/RETAGS/page/artistic-research-productions.
12. https://creativecommons.org/.

UNCOVERING THE HISTORY OF THE NAZI HOLOCAUST IN SENEGAL THROUGH ARTISTIC AND HISTORICAL RESEARCH

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This paper describes the author's residency in Dakar, Senegal, where he created artworks in response to the history of anti-Semitic laws and the Sébikhotane concentration camp, established by the Vichy French Colonial Regime in West Africa. The artworks aim to inform audiences about this little-known history and use symbolism that Senegalese people can relate to. The paper discusses the research conducted, the positive reception of the artworks, and the author's role as an artist, researcher, and performer. The paper also provides descriptions and explanations of some of the artworks created during the residency.

Background

In 2020 I was invited to a residency with RAW Material Company in Dakar, to produce a body of artwork in response to the recently uncovered history of anti-Semitic laws and the Sébikhotane concentration camp, established and run by the Vichy French Colonial Regime throughout West Africa – at the time, *Afrique-Occidentale Française* (AOF), a French colony.

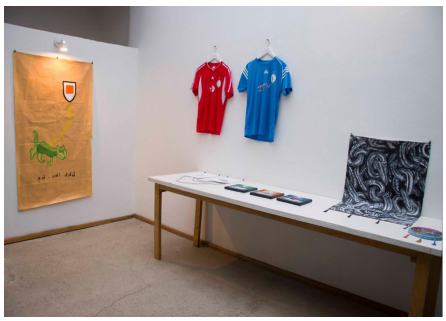
I spent January to March 2020 there, just before the COVID-19 pandemic arrived in both Senegal and South Africa, doing artistic work and conducting research. The latter included a visit to the location of the concentration camp in the small town of Sébikhotane, archival document research at the Senegalese National Archives, and, most importantly, a meeting with Professors Alioune Dème at the Universite Cheikh Anta Diop (UCAD); Ruth Ginio (Ben Gurion University of the Negev) and Mamadou Kandji (L'Harmattan Publishers). Without their help and research, this project would not have been possible. I had in fact first heard about this episode in history when Professor Dème visited the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre in 2018.

The primary aim of this work is to inform art-viewing audiences about this little-to-unknown bit of Jewish Holocaust history on the African continent. Part of my methodology when making the works was to use symbolism that Senegalese people could identify with and thereby access the work. Each artwork responds to a story uncovered by historical research. As this historical research is recent and ongoing, each work and its meaning are to be imagined as threads in a tapestry still under construction. My roles as the author of this work are threefold: artist (creator), researcher (to inform the artworks) and performer (as disseminator of information/knowledge). The research comes before the art production, and the performance follows, in the form of presentations at art/museum/knowledge and conference spaces on the African continent.

During my time there, I produced seven artworks, one of them a video that I was able to bring home with me to Johannesburg. As is the nature of research-based artistic practice, each work has a story behind it, whether it was created for a specific reason or inspired by real or imaginary historical events and stories. I acknowledge that I approached this work with certain sensitivities implicit in my own subjectivity. I was sure that I did not want to depict any bodies, people or faces, whether of the actual prisoners, Jewish or otherwise in the Sébikhotane camp, or of Africans themselves who would have been subject to oppressive colonial rule at the time. This is because of the power that artworks assume when they represent bodies, representation that can be read as replicating past violence or current trauma. My intention was rather to produce artworks with signifiers that were immediately understandable to a contemporary Senegalese and African audience, to build connections between this history and their own experience and ideas. The work was generally well received by its first audience in Dakar, Senegal. Art critic Massamba Mbaye described the work as "philosophical," while reminding the audience that in the region, Jewish people were still a marginal group. To the question of whether the Sébikhotane camp was actually a concentra-



RAW Material Company – Centre for Art, Knowledge & Society, Dakar, Senegal (2020).



VOX Artis, Joe Turpin, RAW Material Company – Centre for Art, Knowledge & Society, Dakar, Senegal (February 2020).



Myself with Tabara Ndiaye & Dulcie Abrahams (RAW Material Company), and Massamba Mbaye, (21 February 2020).



Some of the audience at the Vox-ARTIS presentation, RAW Material Company, Dakar, Senegal, 21 February 2020 Many were hearing about this history for the very first time. The conversations with them afterwards were invaluable.

tion camp or simply a prisoner-of-war camp, the archival record provided an answer in its use of the word "concentration."

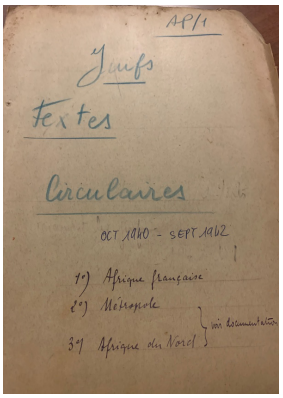
After a discussion with Jordan Saltzman – whose thinking and support have helped me immensely – the work was presented at the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre in July–September, 2021. A presentation had been given to the Ninth Street Artist Group in Johannesburg in November 2020, the first time the work and the history informing it had been introduced to the Jewish Community in South Africa.

A Complicit Victim depicts two drawings, united by a lace cord. The uniforms depicted belonged to two historical figures, active in and affected by this history in different yet similar ways.

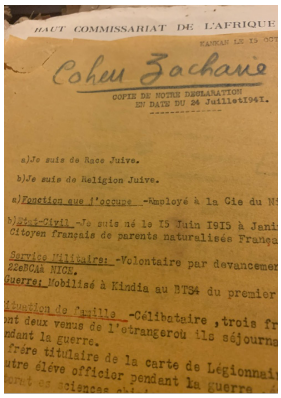
The white military uniform on the left belonged to Leon Géismar. Géismar was a Jewish and French colonial official stationed in a top position in the capital of the AOF region, Dakar. When the Vichy regime assumed power under the Nazis and inherited France's African colonies, Géismar did not particularly object to the politics and kept his position in Senegal. Eventually, however, Leon Géismar was forced to step down because he was Jewish. In the archives we found written objections from Géismar's colleagues testifying to his patriotic nature and requesting that he be allowed to remain in his post. But such was the antisemitism of Vichy that he



UNESCO Materials provided at RAW Material Company's library, RAW Base, in anticipation of my residency. The book is a reader for Senegalese school children to learn about the Holocaust in the Wolof language



The archived documents relating to the persecution of Jews by the Vichy colonial regime at the National Archives of Senegal in Dakar



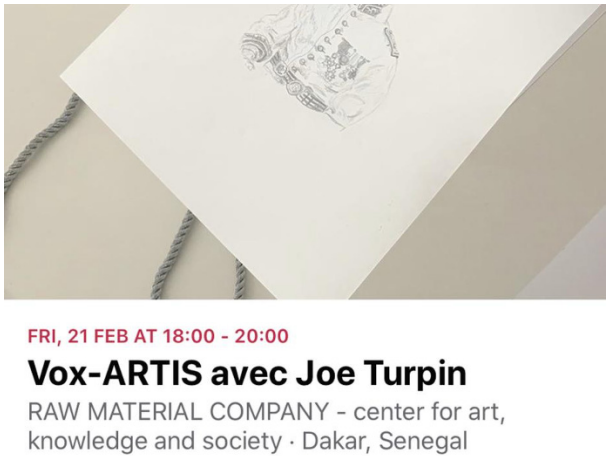
An example of the anti-Semitic stipulations for Jews in the region to register with the colonial authorities



Zines made at RAW Material Company's library, RAW Base, documenting the produced work



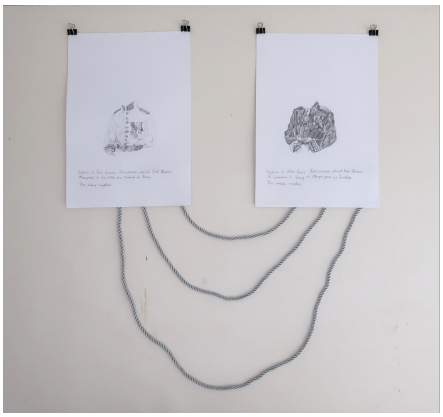
Meeting with Professor Alioune Dème in his office at UCAD



Advertisement for the culminating event of the residency.

was eventually fired. According to the Vichy regime's forced Jewish registration and declaration documents, most of which are kept in the Senegal National Archives, there were fewer than two hundred Jewish people in the whole AOF population of over 15 million people at the time.

The black military uniform on the right belonged to Félix Éboué. Éboué was an Afro-Caribbean of slave descent and a French colonial official, one of the highest-ranking Black men in the French and colonial military ranks. He was a Gaullist in his political thinking and already stationed in Africa, in Chad, when the Vichy took over. Éboué joined the French resistance, whose cross marker is visible on his uniform, and fought with the Allies against the Vichy forces on the continent.



A COMPLICIT VICTIM 2020 – 2x 210mm x 297mm, measurements variable, lace cord, graphite on paper

It was striking to me how similar their uniforms and photographic poses were, though perhaps serendipitous that the white official wore a white uniform, and the Black official wore a black uniform. Géismar was a victim of antisemitism, yet he was complicit in the colonial oppression of Africans. Éboué was a victim of racism, yet he too was complicit as a colonial official. The lace cord unites the two figures in their complicit victimhood.



WISE CHEEK 2020 – 3x 203mm x 203mm, acrylic on canvas

As I was searching for signifiers that could connect contemporary and historic African and Senegalese cultural symbolism with that of Jewish cultural symbolism, one thing that struck me was the ubiquity of the Sumbia or Laffa, a woollen hat (centre canvas). This hat is worn mostly by Muslim men in the region, having been popularised in African political consciousness by the leader Amílcar Cabral. The woollen hat originates in Scandinavia, where the cold temperatures required it, and Cabral and other leaders who spent time training in Moscow and other northern regions would have picked it up. Although designed to be worn in a cold climate, the hat remains popular in the heat of West Africa. The head covering on the left canvas is the Yarmulke, or Kippah, and is traditionally worn by Jewish men. It is not a common site in the region, but I did see some worn by a visiting Rabbi and at the embassies I visited for information. I also took my own Kippah with me which I wore for saying Kaddish at a gravesite and the Sébikhotane camp, and when celebrating Shabbat evenings in the residence. The fez/tarboosh hat (right canvas) has a double meaning on the continent historically. In Senegal and other parts of the continent, it is recognised as part of the uniform of African soldiers in the colonial armies. It has symbolic value and can be seen today in Senegal in the uniform of some political guards. The fez has a connection with Jewish history: during the Ottoman Empire, it was worn by non-Muslims, including the Jewish male population. My great-grandfather, who came from Egypt, wore one often. During the time of the Ottoman Empire, Jewish and Muslim populations lived side-by-side in relative peace.

The title *Wise Cheek* is chosen because the words for 'wise' and 'cheek' in both Wolof, the majority language spoken in Senegal, and Hebrew are the same – these being 'Hakham' and 'Lechi,' respectively. It may be a coincidence, but I like to think that there is some connection between their origins. That is what this work is about: connections.

This painting is based on a sketch I made the first time I visited Dakar, on holiday, in 2018. At that time, I was very interested in the symbols and visual culture of different places. The orange square (from a mobile company), colour pallet and cat are to be seen everywhere in Dakar, and so a combining of these elements is used to represent the place. I was already aware of the Sébikhotane camp, and included in Arabic a sentence meaning "Should I now think of death?" (Although most sig-

nage in Senegal is in French and therefore the roman alphabet, Arabic is also visible throughout the country on signposts and shopfronts, and the majority Islamic population can write in Arabic script.) This was because I was saddened by the connection I felt to the Jewish people who were incarcerated in a concentration camp in such an otherwise beautiful part of the world. There is no final confirmation yet that any of the seven or so confirmed deaths at the Sébikhotane camp were Jewish people, but it remains a strong possibility. It is also possible that not all the deaths were documented.

Engrained in the history and consciousness of West Africa is the painful era of the transatlantic slave trade. Outside Dakar is Gorée Island, where many slaves were imprisoned, shackled and taken away forever. As chains would have bound the slaves, so would they have bound the prisoners at the Sébikhotane camp – whether they were Jews, prisoners of war, people from enemy states or others deemed 'undesirable' by the Vichy regime. Chains are a common visual symbol of oppression, and the act of breaking them is to set oneself free. My position as an artist is one of openness to both African and Jewish perspectives, in a posture of veering away from Eurocentricity.

Jewish footsteps in Senegal also tell of a synagogue that once stood, now lost to the ocean, on the coast near the town of Rufisque. After their expulsion from Spain during the inquisition, from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries Jewish people fled south into North Africa, some even into North Western and West Africa. These refugees, resident at the trading port of Gorée Island, would have built and prayed in this now lost synagogue. Over time, this population had descendants that became converts to Catholicism.

In imagining a lost or destroyed synagogue, it is easy to think of the devastation caused by the Nazis and their collaborators. But even before the Holocaust (and since, too), synagogues were the targets of antisemitic arson and destruction. To think that it was nature in the form of the ocean that took this synagogue away is a much more pleasant and natural thought. A history master's student at the Université Cheikh Anta Diop has proposed work with marine explorers to try and locate fragments and relics from this structure. At the time of writing, it is still a proposal. I look forward to the day that something is found!

This canvas depicts a landscape, the coastal site where the Sephardic synagogue once stood. There are two musical instruments, a Kora – the sacred and delicate instrument of the Griot musicians and storytellers of this region – and a shofar, the Ram's horn blown to welcome holy days in Judaism but also to warn of impending war. The image of the fist holding the shofar is inspired by the Holocaust memorial at the Jewish section of West Park Cemetery in my hometown of Johannesburg. I travelled with a blade of grass and a stone from this section, and let them loose on the ground at the Sébikhotane campsite.

Another notable sight for visitors to Senegal and West Africa today is the sheer number of football jerseys worn by people, men, women and children. It is another symbol that people would easily recognise and a convenient way of forming connections. I had previously made artworks using football jerseys, always changed or interrogated in some way to transform the garments into art objects.

This work comprises the home and away football jerseys of an imagined prisoners' football team from the Sébikhotane camp. It is highly unlikely that a football team was actually formed there, so this work probably uses the most artistic license. The choice of the shirts' manufacturer is not accidental or random: a famous German brand started by a former Nazi soldier. The club badge depicts prisoners walking free; two footballs; the name of the camp and the year of its operation (1940), surrounded by chains. Above the crest is the Star of David, the symbol of Judaism, in place of where many actual football clubs place a star after they've achieved a milestone.



GREEN CAT SENEGAL 2020 – 830mm x 1380mm, acrylic on canvas



LES CHAÎNES 2020 – 560mm x 790mm, acrylic on canvas; silk



I WOULD RATHER IT LOST TO THE FORCES OF MOTHER NATURE, THAN HANDS OF AN ARSONIST 2020 – 200mm x 200mm, acrylic, graphite, ink on canvas; silk

The central motif, usually that of the sponsor, represents the French national railway (TGV). The people in the town of Sébikhotane remember the railway being built in French colonial times, dividing the town yet connecting it to elsewhere. The TGV was complicit in the transportation of Jewish people to the death camps, as well as in ferrying weapons to the Vichy and Nazi frontlines. However, at the same time, workers on the TGV were active members of the French Resistance, and often purposefully sabotaged or delayed the weapon transports. The two kits, like those of modern football clubs, represent 'home' and 'away' variations. The TGV logo on the red 'home' kit shows the very first logo of the TGV (SNFC) (as it would have appeared during the Second World War), and the logo of the French resistance. The away kit variation features TGV written in cursive text, a common visual aesthetic of African football club kits.



SANS TITRE (MAILLOTS) 2020 – 750mm x 800mm, two individual garments, flocking, synthetic polyester material, wood, metal

This video work was filmed at the sites of the Sébikhotane Camp and William Ponty School in the town of Sébikhotane outside Dakar. It depicts the sites as they look; the blades of grass and stone from the Holocaust Memorial are scattered, and Kaddish is recited.



In Rufisque, the town where the lost synagogue lay on the coast, there is a single Jewish grave in the Catholic cemetery, bearing a Hebrew inscription. This grave belongs to a young woman who passed away in 1919, a significant time before the Vichy regime took charge. There is an understanding that a whole Jewish section existed in the cemetery beforehand, probably connected to the synagogue, as this cemetery overlooks the ocean, but many headstones have presumably been replaced and buried since those days. I placed a stone at her grave, and said Kaddish too, before ritually washing my hands as we left. These scenes are also depicted in the film because the rites of mourning are performed in memory of all who died in the Holocaust.



Postscript: Two More Works



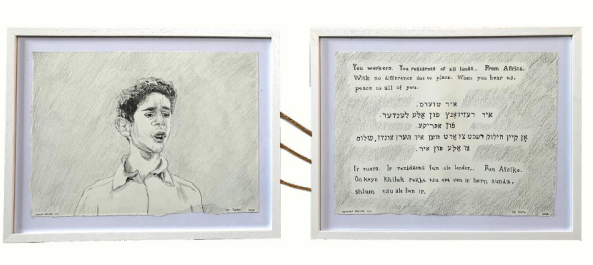
Stills from *GIVE ME A SIGN* 2020 – Video Piece (10:35)
Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sWbjlUsF44A

I view this project as ongoing. There is still so much to be done, whether artworks to be created, research to be conducted and information to be discovered, even books published, events and commemorations held, etc.

There are many links between Africa and the Holocaust, mostly in South Africa, which has had and still has a significant Jewish population. I am also interested in the little links that appear, like working through research and history in Senegal – very much on the "margins" of the Holocaust, as Ruth Ginio puts it; little links like that of Anne Frank learning the name of Kenya's capital city, Nairobi, while she was in hiding, and recording this in her famous diary. One other small link like this took me by surprise.

For my personal artistic research, I recently purchased a collection of restored Yiddish cinema in high definition. One of these films, *Mir Kumen On* (1936), was funded by a Jewish workers' Bund in Warsaw and depicts a day in the life of a sanatorium in Poland devoted to the health of Jewish children. No actors or actresses were used in the making of the film – the actual children and workers at the Sanatorium play all the characters. It is known that all the people in the film met their fate at the hands of the Nazis, either deported to Treblinka or killed in the Warsaw ghetto uprising.

There is a scene in the film when a young boy calls out a united workers' declaration. Speaking in Yiddish, he mentioned men and women from places like France to China, so I started to listen more closely, wondering if he would mention Africa too. Lo and behold, the young lad includes Africa and announces that one's place of origin should not be a marker of difference. This can be seen as hugely progressive, considering that the film was made at the height of colonialism and twelve years before apartheid-style segregation was formalised in South Africa.



COMMON NATURE 2021 – 2x 380mm x 280mm, graphite on paper, lace cord

As an artist and researcher, I was very keen to search the archives at YIVO in New York when I arrived in 2021 to pursue my MFA at the Pratt Institute. This was after the residency in Dakar, Senegal (2020) described above. The project initiated then became ongoing after the work it produced was exhibited at the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre in 2021. Hoping to find some relevant raw material within the archives, I came upon the records of the Centre for Jewish History and the digitised archive of the Leo Baeck Institute. After searching the term "Senegal," I asked to see a drawing by the artist Hermann Struck. It was a portrait of a Senegalese prisoner of war named Samba Diallo. A lithograph, with ink on paper.



ETERNAL RETURN 2021 – 2x 310mm x 310mm x 310mm, Oil stick, oil, graphite on canvas, 1x 310mm, Oil, acrylic on canvas, lace cord

I had noticed a discrepancy in the archiving information and title of this drawing and was hoping to speak to somebody at the archives about it. I was eventually assisted in the matter over email. The discrepancy was as follows: In the archive, the title of the work by Hermann Struck was described as "Samba Hiallo, Christian man from Senegal." As someone familiar with the culture and history of Senegal, the surname of the sitter (who had also signed the Struck portrait of himself) seemed odd, as it did to Senegalese friends I spoke to about it. "Diallo" (with a "D") is a much more common surname in Senegal and West Africa, a name of Fula cultural origin. With the fine digitisation of this drawing, it was possible to zoom in on Samba's signature and see that his name in fact was Samba Diallo (although one could also see why the "D" was mistaken for an "H"). This is an error that Struck himself possibly made, as his writing in the bottom right of the drawing indicates. It seemed to me that the sitter's agency in writing his own name needed to be acknowledged. I politely requested that the correction be made in the catalogue record, and it was.

Naming is powerful, and agency is important, especially for people who are marginalised. I am someone with an openness to Jewish and African perspectives, and these worlds collide in this drawing and this moment. The artwork I produced, *Eternal Return*, consists of three canvas panels, two of them triangles, which drew inspiration from the shapes that make up the symbol of the Jewish people, the Star of David. The canvas subject inter-textualises Struck's portraits of both Samba and himself. Underneath the image of their faces, their surnames are written in the text of their own language. In Adlam script, the alphabet of the Fulani people, there appears the word "Diallo." The Hebrew text, the alphabet used by Yiddish speakers, reads "Struck." The colours of the triangles were loosely inspired by the flags (at the time of World War I) of the countries that the men were fighting for: France and Germany. From the two canvas triangles protrude gold and silver cords, which meet and unite, becoming entangled and flowing onto a white, this time circular, canvas on the floor. This represents the historical entanglement that brought these two men into proximity with one another, in an extraordinary moment of globalisation and cultural interaction, where the precarious and complex geopolitics of past,

present and future are somehow simultaneously there. This work also extends my project of tracing Jewish and Senegalese historical moments and footsteps beyond the historiography of the Second World War to embrace the First World War.

There are now a few online resources regarding the project put together by the Johannesburg Holocaust and Genocide Centre. These can be found in the list of References.

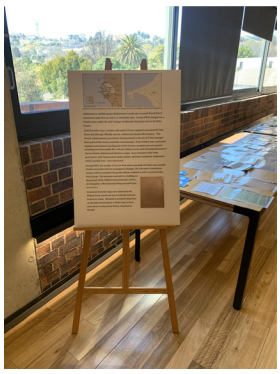


Images from the show at the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre in 2021

Conclusion

Inspired also by the kind visit of Jordan Saltzman, I am conducting some further research in other online archives. A starting point has been the Yad Vashem list of names (an online database), but I also plan on accessing the archives of the University of Southern California (a Sébikhotane camp survivor's testimony exists there), the United Nations and the South African Museum of Military History. Further suggestions or recommendations are welcome. Further research may also lead to the production of new artworks.

"*La chèvre est souvent le témoin de l'histoire*" (The goat is often the witness to history) – A Senegalese audience member at the presentation.



Images from the show at the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre in 2021

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"Podcast with Professor Alioune Deme." https://soundcloud.com/user-858426360/jhgc-in-conversation-with-prof-alioune- deme?utm_source=clipboard&utm_campaign=wtshare&utm_medium=widget&utm_content=https%253A%252F%252Fsoundcloud.com%252Fuser-858426360%252Fjhgc-in-conversation-with-prof-alioune-deme

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A MUSICAL HISTORY THROUGH VOCAL EXPRESSIONS AT THE ABBEY CINDI COSMOLOGY CONCERT

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This paper reports on a research project that culminated in a concert honoring South African musician and activist Bra Abbey Cindi. The project involved reissuing Cindi's album, forming a band of young musicians to perform his music, and creating a vocal group called No Limits to reinterpret Cindi's earlier South African choral works. The paper proposes the use of music to explore the past, present, and future, linking generations and addressing social issues. It discusses specific compositions, their lyrical and musical merits, and the process of arranging them for vocal performance. The paper also highlights the role of community engagement and the value of reimagining historical musical works.

Introduction and Context

The Mamelodi Arts and Culture Forum (MACFO) initiated a project to honour veteran artists, and the first to be honoured was the musician and activist Bra Abbey Cindi. MACFO's initiative was undertaken in partnership with the Wits School of Arts and the Wits History Workshop. For a concert planned for International Jazz Day 2022, Abbey Cindi's self-produced, retrospective album of 2008, *Abbey Cindi's United States of Africa*, was reissued on CD, and a band of young musicians from Greater Tshwane was formed to learn his music and perform it with him for the first time.

The performance was split into two sets. The second half consisted of Cindi performing a selection of tracks accompanied by a four-piece band. The first half, for which I directed the music, provided a sonic tale and an all-vocal interpretation of musical pieces in early singing and compositional styles that preceded and informed the cultural context later occupied by Abbey Cindi's sound. In this open segment of the performance, and drawing on my choral interests, as a practitioner and researcher, I adapted his and other compositions. I utilised the voice to create and direct the articulation of the musical arrangements through performance by a vocal group, No Limits, which I will introduce later.

The aim of this paper is to observe how the first half used music to explore the idea of the past in the present while projecting into the future and telling Bra Abbey's story within the broader South African narrative. The intention was to link generations of composers, performers and audiences since the late 1800s by applying a contemporary artistic lens and recreation of musical encounters.

The specific Abbey Cindi compositions were reimagined in this first segment included "Ndoneni Kulelizwe" and "Kulikhuni Ukuba Yindoda" from his 2020 re-issue of the album "United States of Africa." The selection of these songs was made in consultation with him and intended to complement rather than duplicate his set. "Teka Msaba," (take the land) would have been thematically appropriate song, written as an instrumental piece with relevant lyrics, but I could not include it because he planned to play it in his set. Overall, informed by the lyrical content of Cindi's album, the performance covered social issues of black struggle and land. It inspired the inclusion of other tracks with similar themes. I considered tracks from the 1930s by Reuben Caluza, "Umteto we Land Act," composed in 1912, sentimentally connected to the first part of the current South African national anthem. The national anthem is thematically related to an earlier composition by Tiyo Soga, "Lizalis'idinga Lakho" of 1861, a prayer followed by John Bokwe's composition "Plea for Africa" of 1892. While composed in different epochs, these songs attend to the pleadings and yearnings of African people about issues of land and liberation. A Cindi-focused oral history project that I introduce below yielded findings that inspired creative engagement with other earlier South African choral works. The themes captured in his songs inform and accentuate the type of repertoire covered here. I arranged the music as a co-researcher in the broader project, and it was performed by the a cappella ensemble No Limits, which I co-founded in Soweto in 1995.

This paper provides the context of the research project that framed this performance and the motivation for its culmination in a concert. It provides specific information concerning each composition, its lyrical and musical merits, and its subsequent arrangement for performance by five voices. The performance on which this paper focuses is informed by an idea of artistic research that underscores the value of arranging as a mode of knowing and adapting musical knowledge to engage with artistic, social, historical and contemporary issues and navigating issues of land, labour and struggle.

Abbey Cindi – Veteran Artist

The oral history component of this research, where Cindi reflects on his artistry and activism, among other things, inspired the performance in the first half of the concert, which is the central focus of this paper. The research engagement culminated in the Cosmology Concert on 30 April 2022 at the Chris Seabrooke Hall at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. Preceding this were extended "on camera" discussions with Cindi, in which he shared his musical journeys and ideologies. On one occasion, the research groups had a listening session where Cindi provided context and reflections for each of his compositions on the "United States of Africa" album. The depth of his knowledge, history and heritage was such as to suggest that a concert performance to reveal and share these ideas was needed. Although Cindi is an activist and social commentator, aspects of his reflections could only be understood through musical expression in performance.

In conceptualising this paper, my view as a researcher is that the project fell within two main methodological paradigms. First, community engagement implies a collaborative process to recognise Cindi and his work as a repository of knowledge. Central to this has been the involvement of MACFO and their initial request for assistance in generating various kinds of documentation relating to heritage and cultural histories. The second paradigm involved the creation of a performance reflecting Cindi's interest in and appreciation of vocal music. An exploration of musical composition and lyrical content that addresses social issues in a selection of pieces thus presented an opportunity for an artistic dimension of engagement. These works were first revisited, which implies listening to pre-existing music with an interest in understanding its context. Secondly, they were re-imagined for how they might be if viewed through a contemporary lens of interpretation. The process of locating the music in a particular moment in history was accompanied by an interest in the contemporary relevance that re-imagining might enable. Together, these purposes resulted in the creative process of arranging, the re-organisation of the musical elements of a pre-existing piece to suit a new or different context.

The interviews and listening sessions with commentary in the oral history part of the research provided the initial details of Cindi's activism and music, and how the former became incorporated into his compositions. Listening to his recordings of instrumental music and learning to understand its context from the interviews prompted an engagement with the music through my medium of expertise, the voice. I listened intently to recreate the musical experience within the affordances of voices only. I then sang mentally and vocally, internalising the music and lyrics of all the songs included here. I selected these according to their place in history and thematic focus. Once they were settled in my mind, I taught them to the group, emphasising the emotion I felt and simultaneously drew from the first sub-audience, the singers, and, eventually, the conventional audience in a performance setting. This was auto-ethnographic research relying on tacit artistic knowledge to generate the vocal arrangements for each piece. Understanding vocal structures and being open to adapting to a singer's ability to execute the ideas became crucial.

I consulted archives in the form of songbooks (*Amaculo Ase Lovedale*), past recordings (Abbey Cindi & Reuben Caluza) and discographies (liner notes). In addition, I found some previous studies on some of the repertoire and composers considered (Erlmann 1991; Detterbeck 2002; Olwage 2003; Lucia 2014).[1] Throughout, I was in communication with Abbey Cindi. The formulation of the concert became the musical extension of a verbal exchange in which we were already engaged.

As an artist and researcher, within the collaboration I assumed the role of re-imagining historical works of relevance, including Cindi's compositions, drawing on my artistic experience as an arranger. This required thorough familiarisation with all the chosen works and the application of tacit knowledge to express the music

with artistic authenticity and academic integrity. Recent projects of a similar nature from other practitioners have captured scholarly interest, for both their artistry and historicity: for instance, reimagining the music of the African Choir of 1892 and the 1930s Reuben Caluza's Double Quartet album (Miller and Sibisi 2014, and Miller and Sibisi 2021, respectively). I am drawn to these projects for their recognition of the value in musical histories and the strength of creative imagination that they bring to bear.

Music and Re-Imaginings

No Limits, the a cappella group, offered a five-voice formation (soprano, alto, tenor, baritone and bass) to present the musical expressions that I generated. As illustrated in the following paragraphs, the lyrical themes of these compositions include prayers and protestations about the condition of black people. Though lyrically evoking a sense of gloom and suffering, the music brings comfort and leans on music-making's collective and participatory nature, which reflects a hopeful sense of solidarity. The crucial feature of this revisiting of existing compositions was using the human voice for works previously popularised using instrumental accompaniment.

"Ndoneni Kulelizwe" (1970s)[2]

This song is about fatigue and frustration with life in the country. It raises a question in the title, "What have I sinned on in this Land".

Ndoneni mna kulelizwe (What is my sin in this land)
Ndoneni kulendawo (What is my wrong in this place)
Ndoneni mna kulelizwe (What is my sin in this land)
Ndoneni kulendawo (What is my wrong in this place)

Ndikhathele mna (I am tired)
Ndiyahamba kulezwe (I'm leaving this land)
Ndikhathele mna (I'm tired)
Lilizwe lenhlupheko (Of this land of struggle)
Ndiyathandaza (I pray)
Ndifun'inkululeko (I want freedom)

Ndoneni mna (What is my sin)
Ndoneni kulelizwe (What is my wrong in this land)
Ndoneni mna (What is my sin)
Kulendawo (In this place)
Ndiya hamba mna (I am leaving)
Ndiya hamba kulelizwe (I am leaving this land)

Ndikhathele x3 (I'm tired)
Ndiyahamba kulelizwe (I'm leaving this land)
Ndikhathele x3 (I'm tired)
Yilelizwe lenhlupheko (Of this land of struggle)

I was drawn to this song because of its lyrical content and guitar rhythm. I assigned vocal parts to the rhythm and isolated a lead voice from the beginning of the arrangement. It starts with the lead improvising *ad libitum*. In different sections, several voices take the lead to give a sense of variation to the constant rhythmic part

that primarily frames the song. The arrangement does not use the entire set of lyrics in the song; it works with "Ndoneni mna, ndikhathele mna, ndiyahamba kulelizwe," which expresses the essence of the theme. As different voices take the lead, they insert their interpretation, ranging from scatting to a melody from a traditional song about being tired and returning from a distant place. This recentres the performance in a dialogue with Cindi's ideas. The irony is that, although it is a song about being fatigued and at a point of conclusion, it has a bouncy rhythm that implies a residue of strength, jubilation and resilience in the face of adversity.
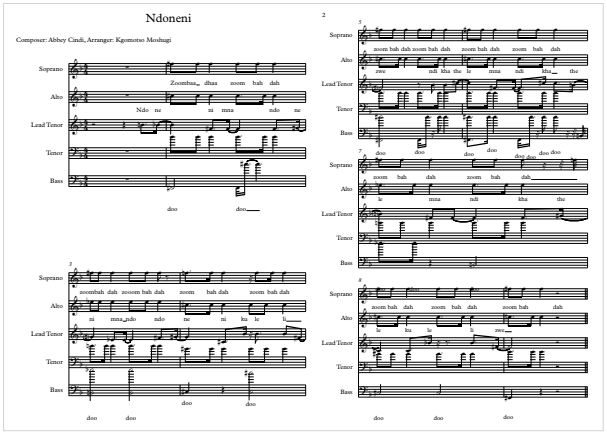


Figure 1: Illustration of the vocal arrangement of Ndoneni.

"Kulikhuni Ukuba Yindoda" (1970s)[3]

This work song depicts a scene of men busy with hard labour in extreme weather conditions, implying that work is undertaken as a duty, not an option to earn money.

> Kulikhumi ukuba yindoda ng'boleken'ipiki mna (Lend me a pick)
> N'gawule (To work)
> Noma sekushisha (Even when it's hot)
> Ngisebenzel'imali (I work for money)
> Noma sekubanda (Even when it's cold)
> Ngisebenzel'imali (I work for money) Spoken word
> O kwaze kwalukhuni ukuba yindoda (It's so hard to be a man)
> Isaga sithi amndla we ndoda awapheli (The proverb says "the strength of a man does not fade")
> Ayikho yonke lento (There's no point to all this)
> Kwaze kwasho ingoma ukuthi (A song says)
> Izithukuthuku zenja ziyophelelemoyeni (The sweat of the brow of a dog will be in vain)

Aligned with the themes in the compositions of the preceding composers, Cindi's song addresses the challenge of the working class and the issue of hard labour that does not receive congruent pay. After Cindi explained that he was also inspired by the slave chants of American slave workers in this composition, I reframed my arrangement around the ideas of struggle and pain. I intended to draw these out through a chant and rhythm carried by the voices, with the lead lyrically expressing the context of labour and hard work under extreme conditions. I assigned the lead voice to the alto voice with enough range to create a variety of emotions through high and low vocal registers. The chant of background voices turns into a harmonised hum halfway through until the end of the song. The lead centres the entire arrangement, emotionally expressing a plangent cry.

Tiyo Soga – "Lizali'sidinga Lakho" (1861)[4]

Soga wrote this multi-denominational hymn that now appears in various hymnals, including the Seventh-day Adventists' *uKristu Engomeni* (1977). This is where and how I have come to know it. It has five verses, with lyrics that over the years have been given different melodies, so that as a hymn several versions now exist. It is a prayer to God for the salvation of all nations and for "this" land, "that all may bow and tell of His glory, and that joy shall only come through Him, in a troubled and corrupt world." The African Choir that travelled to England in 1892 sang this hymn for Queen Victoria

(McCord 1998). It encapsulated their struggles and the sentiments they wished to express about their African reality (Detterbeck 2002).

Although this is an old hymn, it is still part of the typical repertoire in local communities, and presumably continues to circulate because of its ongoing meaning and relevance in the 21st century. For the reasons stated above, I was drawn to it and integrated it into the repertoire for the performance. It resonated with the ideas of prayer for Africa, a call for help and a sense of reliance on supernatural intervention in the conditions of struggle in which people find themselves.

In my arrangement, the song opens with a humming to signify a sense of solemnity. I was intent on retaining the original melody as popularly known, but decided to create a variation with background voices through a different and vertical melody that moves with the harmonic parts. Inspired by the need to accentuate the lyrics' meaning and emotion, I ensured that each verse was unique, even when the original melody in the lead remained unchanged. I also added the second melody moving together with the first in the lead on the fourth verse to create a sense of climax in the arrangement. I had already produced this arrangement in an earlier recording and kept it close to the recorded version, even though the performance had minor variations, given that there were only five harmonic parts (fewer than in the earlier arrangement).

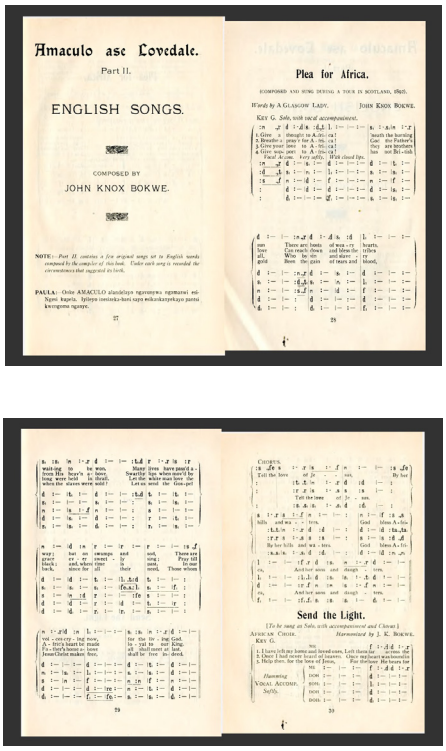

Amaculo ase Lovedale.
Part II.
ENGLISH SONGS.
COMPOSED BY
JOHN KNOX BOKWE.
Plea for Africa.
Send the Light.

Figure 2: Illustration of the original composition – Plea for Africa

John K. Bokwe – "Plea for Africa" (1890s)[5]

This song was also among those performed by the African Choir on their England tour of 1892. It had appeared earlier in a locally published song collection, citing John Bokwe as the composer of the music and a "Glasgow Lady" as the author of the words. Drawn from a 1922 edition of *Amaculo Ase Lovedale*, this version of the song has four verses and a chorus. The words specify the conditions of Africa and the need for intervention, with an appeal for love and support towards Africa and Africans. Over the years, it has attracted various artists (including the soloist Sibongile Khumalo) who have performed and recorded it, utilising only a selection of verses.

In my arrangement, I altered the rhythmic flow of the melody and, consequently, the entire song. I opted for a slower pace. For instance, where the original melody goes through the first phrase and sustains the word Africa only at the end, I created a long-sustained note on the word "thought" on the second beat of the arrangement. This allowed for an accentuated word expression. In my view, the original version is hurried. My arrangement aimed to address this. The time allocated for the entire performance did not permit elaborate arrangements. As a result, in my approach to this particular piece I discarded all the other verses. I used the first verse and a repeat of the chorus with extended harmonies and a slight chant in the phrases leading into the chorus. Working with the idea of a plea, I created a "big" ending on a high-pitched last phrase with some tension in the tenor part that rapidly resolves, while the bass moves from a high to a low octave on the tonic.

Reuben T. Caluza – "Unthetho We Land Act" (1912)[6]

Caluza wrote this song to express his regret at the provisions of the Natives' Land Act (Detterbeck 2002). The song is based on the 1930s recording he made in London with Caluza's Double Quartet. On the cover of the record, he appears as the conductor, standing in front of nine individuals. The original recording has piano accompaniment and conventional soprano, alto, tenor and bass voices. The original form consists of sections A and B that are repeated. The words refer to the prohibi-

tion of blacks from buying and owning land. The last part is about a cry for future generations that have no place of their own in the land of their forefathers.

The arrangement retains the integrity of the original melody with slight variations and extensions of the harmony. At the end of the song, I created a medley by adding the words of another popular struggle song, "Thula Sizwe" (Hush Nation), although I do not use the melody of the actual song. The words Thula Sizwe form a rhythm through background voices, and their use is enough to suggest the reference to the known song and its sentiment. The two are connected by emphasising the silencing or comforting of the crying nation. Somewhere in the middle of the repetitive rhythmic section, I interrupted the chanting of "Thula, Thula, Thula, Thula Sizwe" with a short reference to the current national anthem, the Sesotho part, "Morena boloka sechaba sa heso, o fedise dintwa le matshwenyeho" (Lord preserve our nation, end wars and struggles), that is essentially a continuation of a prayer. Overall, this connects the cry for the land with a response of comfort and prayer, further echoing the sentiments of Soga's and Bokwe's hymns.

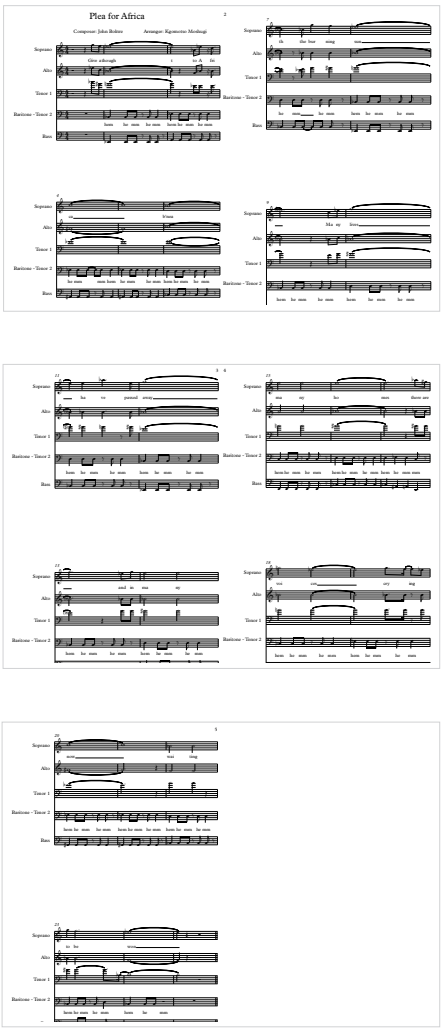


Figure 3: Illustration of the arrangement – Plea for Africa

Manhattan Brothers – Male quartet from the 1950s

"Mbube," Solomon Linda's song from 1939,[7] has been in the media in recent decades due to copyright violations and issues arising from its international use in film and Broadway musicals. However, some of its earliest popularisations came through Solomon Linda and the Evening Birds, soon followed by the Manhattan Brothers quartet. It has since been part of a range of choral repertoires, often creating excitement through the significance of the bass voice singing "mbube haaa, we mbube haaa, we mbube haaa." It is one of the most easily identifiable songs linked directly to South African music traditions. Including this song in Cindi's research-based performance was based on its history of internationalisation as an early African composition and its impact on male group singing. The Manhattan Brothers also influenced male jazz singing in ways that have defined subsequent styles and male group singing traditions.

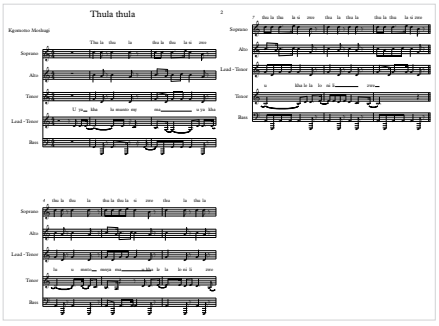


Figure 4: Illustration of the vocal arrangement for Thula Thula:

Joshua P. Mohapeloa – "Diphala" (1951)[8]

As a prolific composer who occupies a prominent position on the South African scene, Mohapeloa's range of music is popular with large choirs and has often been performed at choir competitions, where I first encountered it as a child. For this performance, I chose a jubilant song about inviting and welcoming new cohorts of students in a school setting. "Diphala" means "blown whistles" or "wind instruments." He refers to these in his depiction of the celebration and joy associated with education.

Mohapeloa's lyrics narrate a story and spark imagery. Simultaneously, he draws on music to bring the story to life with a counterpoint in the "B" section of the song where he imitates the blowing of pipes with the words "Peperipepe," which are not actual words but onomatopoeic sounds. I included this piece for its popularity in choral settings and to draw in Mohapeloa as an African composer who uses a local culture and its symbolism to express musical ideas in a way rarely viewed in Cindi's jazz genre. Both are memorable artistic expressions of African culture, separated by genre and tradition but connected by compositional skill.

I used this moment to intersect the often-formal choral tradition with the often-informal jazz expression. The original version is often fast paced. The version performed by No Limits is slower and in the "Bosa Nova" feel with a lead voice that carries the song's essence, background vocals supplying what is conventionally is expected from a jazz piano accompaniment, and a vocal scat imitation of a walking bass.

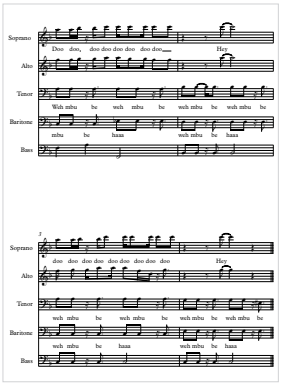


Figure 5: Illustration of the vocal arrangement for Mbube – Composer (Solomon Linda), Arranger (Kgomotso Moshugi)

Conclusion

This research-based performance sought to advance knowledge and the ways in which it can be attained and disseminated. It was crafted with the understanding that, although qualitative means such as interviews yield valuable insights, some artistic subjects require the application of artistic tools to reveal their richness (Przeworski and Salomon 1995). This was certainly the case with a project such as this, which links the past with the present through contemporary lenses, reflections and voices. Darla Crispin (2015) proposes a valuable approach that I adopted in a previous project (Moshugi 2022). It identifies artistic research at the input level, which informs the focus of a research question on artistic phenomena. The next level, throughput, utilises artistic modes and methodologies to gather or analyse data. The third level entails artistic output as a supplement or complement to, or an outcome of, the research. Following this logic, this paper's attention to arranging and its interconnections with composing positions it in the terrain of artistic research as input. Utilising listening and singing to know the compositions and then creating and disseminating the arrangements in their new, totally or slightly altered form, represents artistic research's throughput and output dimensions. At the same time, studying ways of knowing through the activities of listening and singing provides grounding for practice-based research relating to the arts, as suggested by Mareli Stolp (2012).
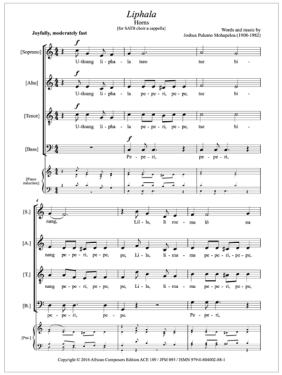


Figure 6: Illustration of the original composition – Diphala
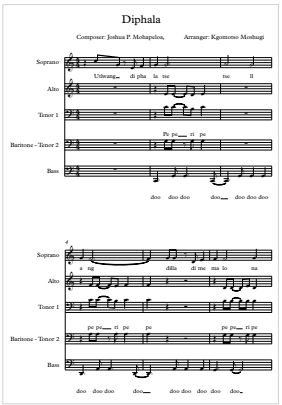


Figure 7: Illustration of the arrangement – Diphala

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Appendix

"Lizalis' idinga lakho"

Lizalis' idinga lakho (Fullfil/realise your promise)
Thixo Nkosi yenyaniso (God the Lord of truth)
Zonk' iintlanga, zonk' izizwe (All tribes and all nations)
Ma zizuze usindiso (Should gain salvation)

Amadolo kweli lizwe (Knees in this land)
Ma kagobe phambi kwakho (Should bow before you)
Zide zithi zonk' iilwimi (Until every tongue)
Ziluxel' udumo lwakho (Declares your glory)
Law'la, law'la, Nkosi, Yesu (Reign, rule, Lord Jesus!)
Koza ngawe ukonwaba (Joy shall come through you)
Ngeziphithi-phithi zethu (Due to our unsettledness)
Yonakele imihlaba (Lands are ruined)

Bona izwe lakowethu (See the land of ours)
Uxolel' izoono zalo (Forgive its trespasses)
Ungathob' ingqumbo yakho (Let not your wrath descend)
Luze luf' usapho lwalo (Lest its children decease)

Yaala, Nkosi, singadeli (Forbid, Lord, that we give up)
Iimfundiso zezwi lakho (The teachings of your Word)
Uze usivuselele (Till you revive us)
Sive inyaniso yakho (So we hear your truth)

"Plea for Africa"

Verse 1
Give a thought to Africa 'Neath the burning sun
They are hosts of weary hearts Waiting to be won
Many lives have passed away And in many homes
There are voices crying out To the living God

Chorus
Tell the love of Jesus By the hills and waters God bless Africa
And her sons and daughters

Verse 2
Breathe a prayer for Africa God the father's love
Can reach down and bless all hearts From his heav'n above
And when lips are moved by Grace They so sweetly sing
Pray for peace in Africa From the loving God

Chorus
Tell the love of Jesus By the hills and waters God bless Africa
And her sons and daughters

Verse 3

Give your Love to Africa They are brothers all
Who by sin and slavery Long were held in thrall
Let the white man love the black And when time is past
In our Father's home above All shall meet at last

Chorus
Tell the love of Jesus By the hills and waters God bless Africa
And her sons and daughters

Verse 4
Give support to Africa Has not British gold
Been the gain of tears and blood When the slaves were sold
Let us send the Gospel back Since for all their need
Those whom Jesus Christ makes free
Shall be free indeed

Chorus
Tell the love of Jesus By the hills and waters God bless Africa
And her sons and daughters

"Umteto we Land Act" (The law of the land act)

Silusapho lwase Afrika (We are descendants of Africa)
Sikhalela izwelakithi (We cry for our land)
Mzulu namXhosa namSotho hlanganani (A Zulu, Xhosa and Sotho persons unite) S
khalel'iland act umtheth'omubi (We cry over the land act, a terrible law)
Owulwelwa ngamanxusa (That was opposed by those who pled for us)
Eyayalela thina lusapho (For refusing us descendants)
Ukuba silithengilizwe (To buy land)

Skhaleli'ngane zikababa (We cry for our father's children)
Ezimeyo zimezweni (Who stand in the land)
Zingena ndawo yokuhlala (With no place to stay)
Elizweni lokhokho bethu (In the land of our fore-parents)

"Diphala"

Utlwang diphala tse tse llang (Hear the whistles and pipes)
Dilla dimema lona bafihlang (They sound to invite you the arriving)
Dire sekolong sena ke thabo (They mean, in this school it's a joy)
Lephuthuloheng bohle ka thabo (All relax with joy)
Peperi pepe
Dibina jwalo (Thats how they sing)
Ho rona ditsebeng ha dikena (In our ears when they come)
Peperi pepe
Melodi ena (These melodies)
Dingkgopotsa thabo esafeleng (They remind me of the joy that never ends)
Thabo le monyaka o mane pele (Joy and celebration ahead).

Notes

1. Detterbeck, M., "South African Choral Music (Amakwaya): Song, Contest and the Formation of Identity"; Olwage, G., "Music and (Post)Colonialism: The Dialectics of Choral Culture on a South African Frontier"; Lucia, C., "Composing towards/against Whiteness: The African Music of Mohapeloa."
2. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XA8ZPuhJODw&list=PL366QCSDkXJn3LeuDvXrarkifH17Y3Ssy&index=7
3. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gYFr1HpPD14
4. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TrzZlJJUD6w
5. See Figures 2 & 3 for the original and arranged versions referred to here.
6. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MpKApTWtLGo
7. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mrrQT4WkbNE
8. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wTGH-PGWZsI&list=RDwTGH-PGWZsI&start_radio=1

   See Figures 6 & 7 for a segment of the original score and an illustration of the arrangement referred to here.

EPISTEMIC DISOBEDIENCE: INSTITUTION-BUILDING AS ARTISTIC PRACTICE

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This paper posits the Nafasi Art Space in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, as a paradigmatic example of independent art spaces in Africa. These spaces, known as offspaces, challenge the status quo by creating divergent infrastructures through creative refusals and re-imaginations. The author conducted a prior study called Platform/Plotform, which identified key working principles of offspaces, such as horizontality, performativity, elasticity, convergence, and second chance. The study visited five African cities to examine the correlations between artistic strategies and urban life. The paper focuses on the Nafasi Academy for Contemporary Art, Expression, and Inclusion, launched in 2020, and explores its curriculum and pedagogical domains that may, like the institution itself, build cultural infrastructures while functioning like a work of art.

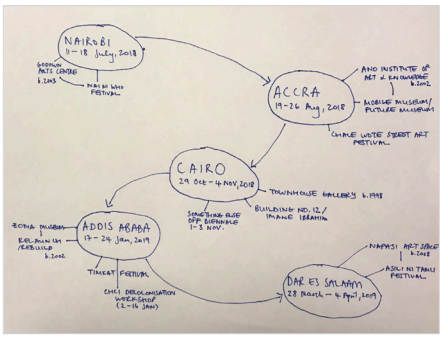
Introduction

A contemporary art academy recently launched by Nafasi Art Space in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, is presented in this paper as paradigmatic of the DIY-DIT working principles of independent art spaces in Africa. Through a combination of creative refusals and re-imaginations, spaces such as Nafasi instantiate infrastructures of divergent kinds that defy the status quo. These so-called offspaces are not only saying things but also doing things with art. Institition-building *as* artistic practice is both physical and conceptual. It is about building spaces that are multivalent and assembling counter-narratives that are polyvocal – that is, exhibiting epistemic disobedience. They shapeshift in response to radical flux and regard sustainability as inducing tomorrow's desired world, today. That is the gist of a prior study I conducted, *Platform/Plotform*, in which Nafasi Art Space was a key participant. That work is described in depth elsewhere, so I only summarise some key findings here (Part I).[1] In its wake, the Nafasi Academy for Contemporary Art, Expression, and Inclusion was launched in 2020 (Part II), offering an ideal opportunity to extend this work into the pedagogical domain. I visited Nafasi Academy in 2022 on a research residency to observe its curriculum in action, offer a lecture in exchange, and garner some feedback on what a teaching module might comprise (Part III).

Part I: Panya routes

"Always start from where you are." Ngugi wa Thiong'o's approach to decolonisation (2017) animates *Platform/Plotform*, in which I set out to fathom key working principles of independent art spaces in selected African cities, using arts-based research, or "thinking in, through and with art" (Borgdorff 2012, 44). I did so by making correlations between artistic strategies and everyday urban life among five key case studies, and came up with five principles that were shared: horizontality, performativity, elasticity, convergence, and second chance. These are elaborated upon below. *Platform/Plotform* was in turn inspired in part by an earlier body of work (including a Johannesburg atelier) in which forms of commoning were evident alongside self-organised spaces as artistic responses to, and coping mechanisms for, adversity and prevailing uncertainty (Gurney 2019, 223). I coined the research project title from Kodwo Eshun's reference to how a small-scale platform might "plotform" – that is, hold durational conversations that form plots which solidify over time while simultaneously questioning themselves (qtd. in Cruz 2016, 10–11). The fieldwork, conducted during 2018 and 2019, went beyond South Africa's borders to find out what other so-called offspaces on the continent were thinking and doing. Offspaces were understood to be independent, collectively organised platforms (not always artist-led), operating on a non-profit basis, with negligible public funding and transversal relations to official logics. They are in effect 'para' institutions, doing the work of institutions but not resourced in the same way, self-assembling different kinds of infrastructure and enlarging the public sphere. Contemporary art in these contexts is imbricated with everyday forms and practices, and is a vital vector for dialogue, exchange, and connecting public life – in the way that a street-side coffee house, salon, barber, or trading kiosk might be too but with an added dimension of intentionality. All five participant spaces were ten or more years old, adeptly shapeshifting in response to constant flux.

For *Platform/Plotform*, I visited five fast-changing cities: Nairobi in Kenya (GoDown Arts Centre), Accra in Ghana (ANO Institute of Arts and Knowledge), Cairo in Egypt (Townhouse Gallery), Addis Ababa in Ethiopia (Zoma Museum) and Dar es Salaam in Tanzania (Nafasi Art Space). Africa and Asia are having to urbanise at rates the West has never had to fathom, according to Aromar Revi (2014), and a



Travel log for *Platform/Plotform*

conflation of social, economic and political questions thus need to be figured out at speed and scale. Revi emphasises everyday lives and local solutions as the way forward, and asks: "Can we build the institutional capacity, understanding, culture and technologies to use this opportunity for change and for good?" The institution-building capacity of offspaces, and their DIY-DIT pathways, can be understood as "*panya* routes," a Kenyan term for a back route or workaround that is collectively formed, generally passable only by nimbler *boda bodas*, the ubiquitous motorbike taxis, or sometimes *matatus*, the minibus version. Panya routes are inventive coping mechanisms for uncertain terrain and often become the main route over time. Forging such routes involves a radically different way of thinking about sustainability: it is not about perpetuating given conditions but rather instituting tomorrow's desired world, today. A collective ethos, collaborative models, and solidarity networks are at the heart of this institution-building, just like a panya route that is forged over time by many passing feet or wheels improvising their own urban hack. Offspaces likewise have world-building implications: by practising strategies of refusal and re-imagination, together, they are thinking about things not only as they are but also as they could be. They are thinking "as if" rather than "as is," which Kwame Appiah calls our most astonishing human capacity, "the ability to access ways the world is not but might have been" (Appiah 2017, 171). Despite the odds often stacked against them, and amid accelerated flux, they institute collective forms of assemblage in ways that should interest others in a world where navigating uncertainty, as experienced by the global South majority, is an increasingly relatable condition.

I timed my fieldwork visits in *Platform/Plotform* to coincide with programming deemed representative and ideally coinciding with an independent event that could provide an alternative reading on art and the urban fabric – like a street art festival, off-biennale or workshop. I used a method of juxtaposition rather than comparison to show resonance and dissonance, and to allow for contextual differences while not overstating singularities. The approach is borrowed from Teresa Caldeira's studies of dissimilar cities from the global South (2017), in which she expands upon the concept of "autoconstruction" – a Latin American term for the way residents build their cities incrementally and collectively using whatever is to hand (2017, 5). That, too, is how independent art spaces assemble their offerings, starting small, and valorising forms that already circulate in public life. As Clapperton Mavhunga writes, it is the ordinary innovations borne out of quotidian realities that are notable, and these are heightened during moments of stress or crisis (2017, 21).

I went to see art programming – a public arts festival, a nomadic future museums project, a gallery exhibition, a museum rebuild, and an arts festival – but I caught each space on a shapeshifting cusp that reflected its artistic thinking, and in some cases comprised the artwork. The programming was not only about contemporary art per se, it was a vector for complex transformations that went beyond the artworld in significance. Art regularly intervened in other fields; it helped to imagine new social realities and also sometimes to instantiate them. For instance, the GoDown in Nairobi, named after the large warehouses in the industrial area it inhabits, was preparing itself in 2018 for a major rebuild into an iconic hub, after a lengthy collaborative process "to design with people." This physical transformation is integrally connected to its annual public arts festival, *Nai Ni Who?* (urban slang for Who Is Nairobi?), which delegates curatorial agency to local neighbourhoods. These efforts are enfolded in a re-imagination exercise to find common ground between GoDown, cultural practitioners, residents, the business community and public officials. *Horizontality* is the key working principle triggered. (That said, each of the five principles occurs in each participant space and cross-pollinates; and there is no particular ordering to their incidence.) Horizontality is a collective and non-hierar-

chical organisational structure. It is also a curatorial ethos, encouraging polyvocality – in the festival, "seeing, feeling, touching, doing, wondering … using all the senses to investigate and question;"[2] GoDown's director Joy Mboya describes this "multiplicity of voices" as exhibiting epistemic disobedience.[3]

ANO Institute of Arts and Knowledge in Accra was also shapeshifting in 2018, on the cusp of international forays, with its founder Nana Oforiatta Ayim curating Ghana's first Venice Biennale pavilion in 2019, and becoming advisor to the government on museums policy. It later celebrated its twentieth year in 2022 by rebuilding entirely out of raffia palm, led by architect Ophelia Akiwumi, in her mid-80s, reflecting a shift in focus at ANO to explorations in the areas of knowledge systems, the environment and education. But when I visited, it was still in a former car repair warehouse with its *Future Museums* project symbolised alongside by an intriguing Mobile Museum – based upon a collapsible kiosk that is nomadic, accessible, multipurpose. The Mobile Museum travelled Ghana with ANO asking everyday people encountered en route what art and culture meant to them, what they would like to see included in a museum and how, and returned with the results in a "polyphony of different ways of telling."[4] This mobility informs a second principle of *performativity*, understood as the agential capacity for contemporary art, under certain circumstances, to instantiate a different set of relations. [5]

The Townhouse in Cairo had fully reinhabited its premises a few months prior to my research visit in October 2018, following a series of upheavals. As it happened, my documentation of its activities turned out to be one of the last as it closed down its institutional life for good the following year, after 21 years of operating. (Access Art Space arose in its stead.) One salient point about Townhouse was its total imbrication with its locality: the programming was reliant upon what was happening around it, the building, the neighbourhood, the city, the country. So when the organisation finally closed the curtains in 2019, it was responding to a complex nest of factors – political, socio-economic and institutional. "Everything is in flux all the time," as its former programme manager Maryam Elnozahy phrased it.[6] This hyperlocality manifested in the third principle of *elasticity*. Its counterpart was opacity and refusal when required by circumstances.

Zoma Museum in Addis Ababa was in the final stages of a rebuild on a new site it had acquired, and it re-opened in March 2019 shortly after my fieldwork ended. It challenged ideas of what a museum could be by espousing ecological principles and different notions of care. For instance, an inherited kindergarten on the new site became integrated as part of the museum's operations: Zoma School. The new build was constructed entirely from traditional techniques like wattle and daub, using earth, mud and straw to create beautiful futuristic forms. The Zoma buildings are works of art in their design and intricate sculptural surfaces. Meskerem Assegued, its co-founder, says taking a countrywide trip and seeing historic sites and how buildings had withstood time was an awakening that inspired her to understand these techniques from the foundations up. "The detail. Everything. How the doorknobs work and where the connections are, why do they make small windows and why in that direction. All those things: you have to be curious. And once you understand that, you see – oh my god, we missed out a lot. People are abandoning them. I thought it was fascinating. How to bring this into the new world? I thought building a new museum was the right idea."[7] This fusion of temporal scales and typologies triggered the fourth principle of *convergence*.

Nafasi Art Space in Dar es Salaam is a membership-based collective operating from repurposed shipping containers which cued the fifth and final principle of *second chance*. Nafasi means 'space' as well as 'opportunity' in Kiswahili. It fuses both by taking the concepts of repair and re-use one step further, to redirection – finding a new purpose for an object, idea or situation and reconfiguring it to a desired end. "Independent spaces are important opportunities for building counter-narra-

tives and imagining other possible worlds," according to its former director Rebecca Mzengi Corey.[8] In 2020, Nafasi took this work of epistemic disobedience into the pedagogical domain with the launch of its own academy.

Part II: Nafasi Academy

Nafasi Art Space is located along a dusty road in Mikocheni B, a mixed-use area in Dar es Salaam, "place of peace," a port city dominated by its beguiling coastline dotted with container ships and, by some estimates, one of the fastest growing cities on the planet.[9] By 2050, a quarter of the world's population will be in Africa; but even now, 40 per cent of all Africans are under the age of 14 and in most countries the median age is below 20, statistics that impact almost every aspect of life (Paice 2022). Change and growth are evident on the streets of Dar, bustling with people and things on the move, including an impressive elevated railway near completion that cuts across the city. Visiting in 2022, the face of the newly installed president, Samia Suluhu Hassan, looms everywhere from billboards bearing hopeful messages, even from the back of a *tuktuk* (three-wheeler scooter taxi) taking me to Nafasi.

Independent art spaces, embedded amidst these accelerated urban dynamics, are fascinating indicators. Nafasi was started in 2008 by a small group of Tanzanian artists, which makes it the longest-standing independent art centre in the country. It is structured as a membership-based organisation, granting voting rights and other benefits like subsidised studios in exchange for monthly dues alongside visiting artists, a voluminous gallery created from a former warehouse, a large performance arena, restaurant, music recording studio, and digital lab. It has morphed from a visual arts to a multidisciplinary space, embracing an immersive and performative approach. Nafasi is about art as a way to navigate precarity and articulate the struggles people face on a daily basis, Corey says. "Our goal in our attempts to institutionalise and create a lasting presence is not just to think of permanence as a space, or [for] individuals or artists, but building relevance of the idea of the place of art in society, which in Dar es Salaam we can't take for granted with pressures coming from the state, or economics, or sociopolitical systems. Art is always pushed to the margins in one way or another, whether it is censorship or being commodified."[10]

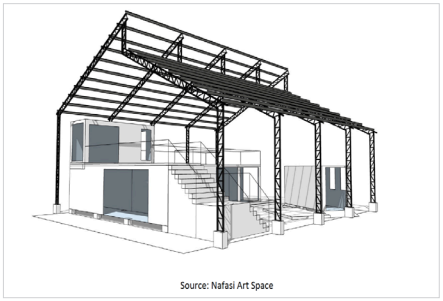
By way of a very practical example, when I visited in 2019, my arrival got delayed because police had entered the Nafasi compound that day seeking to arrest an artist. He had managed to evade them, with the result that ten other artists and staff members who happened to be there were detained instead. The artists were later released without charge – and two days later, regardless of this incident, Nafasi went on to produce its planned festival, *Asili ni Tamu*. "I think abuse of power and lack of due process is something we as an art space and everyone in society have to deal with. I think that experience really showed me the power of the network and solidarity," Corey said at the time.[11] Yet, the deft ability of offspaces to confront such conditions with a combination of creative refusals and reimaginations is one of the defining characteristics to emerge from my research. Regarding her investigations of black social life, Saidiya Hartman speaks about this tension between refusal and utterance, between pessimism and vitalism, as alternate ways to create a desirable set of social arrangements – what she terms "counterfactual imagination." Hartman says sensory capacity, conjectural anticipation and an imaginative case are unauthorised by the canon and conducted in a minor key, and calls for thinking "that enables us to refuse and battle the structures that contain us." [12]

Cue the *Nafasi Academy of Contemporary Art, Expression and Inclusion*. It began life as a discussion in 2018, after Nafasi had been operating as an art space for ten years. The organisation set out to critique its own history and praxis and extend support to those who struggled to find a place in the art community – in particular

women and young artists. In short, the problem of 'what next' became pressing for artists who had developed over the past four to eight years within Nafasi's somewhat magic circle.[13] "We wanted Nafasi to be a place where artistic expression continues to evolve, and … to create space for younger artists to come in," said Corey.[14] Another factor was the ad hoc nature of the expertise the artists were receiving, which while significant was starting to feel uneven and unpredictable. What was needed was a more structured approach to address gaps and ensure progress. The decision was made to launch an academy focused on contemporary art and arts management, and the team set about building one – both literally and conceptually. The journey began with the Nafasi community, exploring options and gestating ideas. It is still a work in progress, "a living document," Corey adds. That document is inspired by other community-oriented curricula, like Bisi Silva's Asiko School in Lagos, as well as European, Asian and Canadian models. As Corey explained: "Imitating other methods and models of education didn't feel true to who we were and what we were trying to do – we were referencing other curricula but channelling this through our own experience and putting together a curriculum we feel is close to what the local context requires." That process started with asking questions, and the curriculum is built the same way, with various ideas coalescing into thematic modules around overlapping enquiries.



Design inspiration for Nafasi Academy taking the elevated canopy of Kariakoo market as referent. Credit: Muddyb, CC BY-SA 4.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0>, via Wikimedia Commons



Design for Nafasi Academy, by Lauren Marshall, image courtesy Nafasi Art Space

The physical build, created by the Nafasi community itself, takes its context seriously, using defunct shipping containers sourced from Dar port. The damaged corners and dented sides of the containers from which it is assembled embody the working principle of *second chance* – of repair, recycling, and redirection. The art shop, the first view of the academy upon entering the Nafasi compound, bulges out at one end. Many cities around the world now embrace container design chic but the Nafasi build is far more pragmatic, as I learnt in conversation with Maria Kessi, Community Manager and core member. Nafasi's premises were initially built this way to keep mobile in case it had to relocate at short notice – something that transpired when its first premises were sold. Among its aspirations for 2026 in its latest Strategic Plan, Nafasi includes "a permanent home."[15]

The design of Nafasi Academy references a local market, Kariakoo, via various distinguishing features of the market, notably its elevated canopy, dominating stairwell and trading kiosks. Situated in a tall concrete building designed by Beda Johnathan Amuli and inspired by a tree canopy, Kariakoo spans several city blocks and sells all manner of items. The market spills out beyond the building's confines. All these features find expression in the academy design: the elevated canopy arching over the entire academy; the stairs dramatically leading up from the amphitheatre to the library space above; and the kiosks giving inspiration to the art shop and studios alongside. The classroom is tucked away underneath the upstairs library, and there is also a workshop and a glass-fronted gallery.

The build fulfils four needs that were identified by the Nafasi artists in a 2018 poll:

- Space (physical and political);
- Education;
- Exchange (networks); &
- Platforms (markets).

It was built with the support of Lauren Marshall (designer), Shabani Kisala (engineer and builder), with the Nafasi team and academy student members pitching in.

In 2022, when I visited the academy, it was in its third year of operating. The detailed curriculum alternates each year between an intensive contemporary art course and curatorship training. The annual rhythm starts with a theory-intensive module, followed by production, a public event, and mentorship, and includes a range of formats from workshops to exchanges, assignments, group work, site visits, community contributions, studio production and public-facing events. The design is neither linear nor encyclopaedic. As Nafasi writes in its publication reviewing its first academy year, *Art as Education*: "One major rebellion of the curriculum design was to build the course not around time-periods, geographies, techniques and media, or even topics, but rather to create clusters of interrelated, perhaps unanswerable questions, emphasising the role of art in envisioning new realities and ways of thinking and being" (Nafasi 2020, 14).



Nafasi Academy, using upcycled shipping containers



The amphitheatre



The library

Part III: Classrooms as artworks

I visited Nafasi Academy to conduct research in August-September 2022, a visit that coincided with a week-long module in its curriculum on public art, towards which I contributed a guest lecture.[16] The classroom offered lively immersion in a range of concepts – from 'the gaze' to 'othering' and 'centring.' Other guest lecturers included filmmaker Amil Shivji considering the challenge of how to provincialise Europe, taking a cue from Ousmane Sembene, "Europe is not my centre," to practising artists such as Paul Ndunguru presenting the realities of leveraging work into public space, and experts from applied disciplines talking about how creative thinking might open up new perspectives in urban development. It was striking to note how many academy participants themselves came from other disciplines: one was an accountant, another a general practice lawyer reshuffling her schedule to fit the art academy into her workload. Simon Sogodi, the academy coordinator, is himself a biologist with a teaching background who formerly worked for Unicef against child violence. "I studied science but I found in science there is art. It is something you cannot differentiate … The way you design things, there is art. Art is a science too," Sogodi said.[17] These two worlds coming together provides him with linking concepts, so that, for instance, he offered the academy a class on public psychology. This cross-pollination is arguably what Nafasi does on a larger scale – what Sogodi describes as a learner-centred approach, responding to what each person knows and brings with them. Art, he adds, lets you present complex ideas in an accessible way.

Art is a vector for thinking about the world at large. Adjacent to the Nafasi classroom are the studios. Stopping in, I noticed that concepts circulating in the classroom were already evident in the artworks in progress. One artist showed me his latest series of paintings, a critique of societal class structure and the realities of systemic drag, using symbols including a table (of power) and steps that at first seemed to suggest movement but on closer reflection revealed how the game of progress is rigged. The students were challenged, following the theory-intensive phase, to produce collaborative performance artworks in public spaces. Proposed ideas included societal issues from homelessness to mental health, first test-run in the Nafasi compound and then for real in public space.

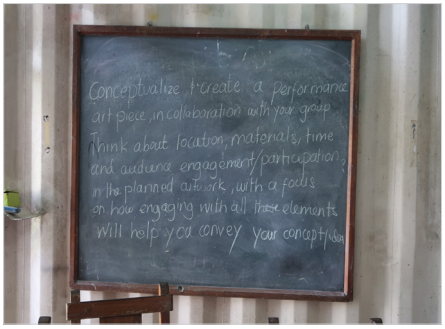
I arrived in Dar es Salaam in 2022 with the provisional idea of returning to run a future course on institution-building as artistic practice, based upon the findings of

Platform/Plotform.[18] I left, having abandoned that plan for a very different proposition. Three things immediately became evident: (i) Translation into Kiswahili would be a requirement for a short course; (ii) Interactivity and questioning using multimedia prompts worked best; (iii) Tethering new ideas to relatable content was ideal. Some of this felt within my grasp, if I were to return with a stand-alone or parallel offering. But to fit with the academy's approach, something very different seemed to be called for. My tentative conclusion was not to create a course that I would come back to teach, but to develop instead a digital toolkit akin to a library of resources that underpins the same content and is accessible to others. It could be open-source and iterative. Others elsewhere could feasibly borrow from the toolkit and add to it, while repurposing the content to their own ends.



Class assignment

There are programmes in the pipeline at Nafasi Art Space, including one in training and capacity building in arts management, which would use a Nafasi blueprint to help participants establish regional arts hubs. The proposed toolkit could work very well in tandem with such a course. But it has potential value for other contexts, too, because it conveys the world-building capacities and artistic thinking of offspaces to manage successfully to navigate conditions of flux and uncertainty. The Centre for the Less Good Idea in Johannesburg, founded in 2016 by William Kentridge, began life in this way: "We had the freedom to create an institution in the same way as on artwork," is how Bronwyn Lace described helping to set it up.[19] One of the frustrations of conducting my own *Platform/Plotform* research was the ringfencing of reference material behind firewalls, its geographic dispersal and inaccessibility. A library of references, ready-to-use technologies, and other teaching aids that are crowdsourced could help to offset this hurdle for other researchers.



Nafasi Academy

One of the modes such a toolkit could consider in its assemblage is 'wicked arts assignments' (Heijnen and Bremmer, 2020) – that is, learning tasks that act as artworks. The editors offer numerous examples in their volume about practising creativity in contemporary arts education. "My pedagogical way of working … has been to rethink what a seminar looks like: how do we make class a work of art", writes Stephanie Springgay (2020, 50) who has developed an Instant Class Kit – a mobile curriculum guide and pop-up exhibition exemplifying aesthetic pedagogy of the not-yet-known inspired by Fluxus. Likewise, "Teaching influences my art practice, and vice versa … And I notice that art disciplines are becoming increasingly hybrid, both in the art world and in art education, but the study programmes are still lagging in this respect …. Education can really also be an artistic medium", writes Pavèl van Houten (2020, 54). There are online educational tools such as *The Art Assignment* where artists offer prompts that anyone can take up and run with, making artistic thinking accessible and relevant.[20] Examples closer to home include *MuseumFutures Africa*, a pan-African collaborative project that works with museums across the continent to explore potentially new formats of African museology. This experiment includes a curriculum for each participating museum's study group, which functions more like a prompt, "flexible and responsive to the context and need of each museum … that encourage(s) self-reflection, collective exploration and criticality through questioning and practice-based enquiry" (2020-21, 5).

This all relates to an underlying concern in this larger body of work: how institutions can operate as artworks, based upon Guattari's question "How do you make a class operate like a work of art?" (1995, 133). David Andrew builds upon that provocation to set up some characteristics that comprise the artist's sensibility; for the class to be a work of art, or "an extended socially engaged, durational activity", those capacities also need to work in tandem with relational and dialogical aesthetics, he writes (2011, 56). Crucially, Andrew notes how "order is tricked by art," following Michel de Certeau, and posits: "This is how classrooms (all institutions) become

artworks and how the occupants of these spaces recover the artist" (Andrew 2011, 58). His treating classrooms as an instance of institutions in general raises the tantalising possibility of other kinds of institutional forms also operating as artworks, which I elaborate upon in more detail elsewhere.[21]

Parting Thoughts

Nafasi Academy, as discussed, is a lively demonstration of the five key working principles of independent art spaces in the following inter-related ways:

- *horizontality* in its flat organisational structure, communally built spaces and self-assembled academy curriculum;
- *performativity* by doing things with art;
- *elasticity* by acting local and thinking global;
- *convergence* by creating a desired tomorrow, today; &
- *second chance* by redirecting existing forms and technologies already circulating in public life (re-use/ repair).

It is potentially a case study, or mobile curriculum, in this not-yet-known toolkit to help other offspaces on the continent crowdsource their ongoing work of epistemic disobedience. Perhaps the idea is not as tricky to assemble as it seems: it should just follow its subject matter and institute itself as if it were an offspace. "*Always start from where you are.*"

Acknowledgements

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Notes

1. See Gurney (2022), in particular Chapter 3: Future Forms, pp.112–159, & Chapter 5: Off-spaces as urban indicators, 194–209; Gurney (2023) summaries the five key principles.
2. Joy Mboya, Reframe conversation series: "Civic Power." African Centre for Cities, [online] 14 October 2020, www.africancentreforcities.net/programme/reframe-conversation-series/
3. "Animating and Activating Citizens." Conference keynote, University of Cape Town, African Centre for Cities, 2 February 2018. Author's notes.
4. Excerpted from a script hand-painted onto the walls of the *Future Museums* exhibition at ANO Institute.
5. I draw this understanding from J. L. Austin's work, *How to Do Things with Words* (1962), in which he regards certain words as performatives, or forms that change the world by the force of their utterance.
6. Personal interview, Cairo, October 2018.
7. Personal interview, Addis Ababa, January 2019.
8. Personal interview, Dar es Salaam, 1 April 2019. Corey was director 2016–2022. The current managing director is Lilian Mushi.
9. One of the most extreme projections by the Global Cities Institute in Toronto estimates Dar es Salaam as the third largest city in the world by 2100 (Hoornweg & Pope, 2014).
10. Corey, "Beyond Our Borders," public panel organised as part of *Platform/ Plotform* workshop, Cape Town, www.africancentreforcities.net/video-beyond-our-borders-independent-art-spaces-as-a-lens-on-city-futures/.
11. Personal interview, Dar es Salaam, 2019.
12. "Writing Black Social Life," seminar, University of the Western Cape, 2 May 2019. Author's notes.
13. Fourteen studio artists completed five-year terms in 2019 and all of them went on to establish their own studios, spaces and venues.
14. Personal interview, Dar es Salaam, 2 September 2022.
15. Nafasi Art Space Strategic Plan 2021–26, p.11. Available: https://issuu.com/nafasiartspace/docs/nafasi_art_space_strategic_plan_2021-26_compressed
16. "Guerilla Gallery: An Artist-Led Roving Platform." Guest lecture at Nafasi Academy, August 2022.
17. Personal interview, Dar es Salaam, 5 September 2022.
18. I have separately developed the outline of a 12-session course that turns *Panya Routes* (Gurney 2022), about *Platform/Plotform*, into a postgraduate teaching module with five independent spaces including Nafasi as case studies; this 'masterclass' was the starting point for a course structure and remains a work in progress for tertiary teaching purposes. Its realisation is subject to institutional variables.
19. Bronwyn Lace, "The Collapse: Creative Liberation of Collective Making." Panel discussion, *Worldings: A Virtual Conference*, Griffin Art Projects and Urban Shaman, 10 July 2021.
20. www.theartassignment.com
21. See Gurney (2022), "Future Forms: DIT-DIT Institution Building as Artistic Practice," pp. 112–159.

ARTICULATING A MOVEMENT PEDAGOGY IN RETROGRADE: MAPPING AN EMBODIED RESEARCH PROCESS

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This paper discusses an artistic research project that challenges representationalism in South African contemporary dance. The author argues against the use of discursive methodologies that reinforce colonial scripts and instead proposes an alternative approach based on embodied practices. The paper explores the concept of choreography as embodied research and its potential to align with a decolonial praxis. The research project involves tracing embodied practices and creating a digital cartography to capture and explore these practices. The author also discusses the emergence of a movement pedagogy that unfolds in retrograde and disrupts conventional understandings of time and pedagogical continuity.

Introduction

This paper draws from a recently completed artistic research project[1] that sought to trouble representationalism in South African contemporary dance praxis. In this research, I argued that discursive methodologies risk recrafting colonial scripts and tether contemporary dance practices to a framework that perceives them as responses to the aesthetics of Western theatre dance. I borrowed from Ben Spatz's (2015; 2020) work to propose an alternative logic by shifting the emphasis from representation and spectatorial methodologies to the embodied practices that circulate across the bodies of practitioners in experimentation, performances and workshops. I identified representation and representationalism as frameworks that uphold and perpetuate hegemonic knowledge structures and proposed that when, alternatively, choreography is conceptualised as embodied research, it may align with a decolonial praxis. Acknowledging that decoloniality cannot be reduced to a singular movement (ND-Lovu-Gatsheni 2013, 15), I lean on the broad understanding that a decolonial praxis seeks to destabilise coloniality's hegemonic discourses in search of epistemological alterity (Grosfoguel 2011, n. p.). I suggested that choreography as thinking, probing, researching, opens up possibilities for 'variations in performance' (Noland 2009, 3) or, in a Foucauldian sense, 'instances of resistance' (Noland 2009, 9), or what Gilles Deleuze calls 'the unpredictable and the new' (Noland 2009, 64–65). The research project involved tracing the pathways of my own movement practice and suggested that instances of movement research, embodied practice, or dance-making are epistemic spaces that create possibilities for developing new technique.

Through a process of mapping or tracing, I gathered samples of embodied practice. This resulted in the creation of digital cartography, to which hyperlinks have been provided at various points in this paper. These samples of embodied practice began to suggest an emerging pedagogy, as I re-encountered new technical propositions not only in the making of new work, but also in my teaching practice. Techniques emerging from the research journey thus began to take shape as principles informing both my artistic and pedagogical practice. Pedagogy became a place for the transmission of embodied knowledge, much as Spatz notes (referencing Paul Preciado) how practical workshops are permeated by a micropolitics that serve to 'create and distribute knowledge' (Preciado, qtd. in Spatz 2020, 24). In my research process, I sought to articulate ways in which embodied knowledge is, as Spatz argues, transmitted *before* the intervention of language, before the writing of a thesis or conventional research paper (Spatz 2020, 24). The process was thus concerned with finding ways to avoid fixing embodied insights in language and resisting analysis and the act of capturing itself, which felt akin to making a colonising move on a process that is best described as meandering, sprawling and slippery (Johnstone 2022, 30). This meets George Tebogo Mahashe's call to problematise the way in which colonial praxis (which persists in the South African academy) continues to fix subjects that are conventionally othered within the academy, by making them 'transparent through description and analysis' (Mahashe 2020, 221). Concerned with finding ways to resist the capture or 'fixing' of embodied knowledge, this paper describes a movement pedagogy as a practice that unfolds in retrograde. Seeking to avoid predetermination and the teleological reach conventionally associated with pedagogy or curriculum, I characterise a retrograde movement pedagogy as one that unfolds in step with an embodied research practice, such that its logic is only fully exposed in hindsight.

I begin by offering a brief overview of my understanding of embodied practice as research, which I borrow from the work of Spatz (2015; 2020), followed by a consideration of how the idea of a pedagogy unfolding in retrograde reworks understandings of continuity and discontinuity, and challenges modernist conceptions of time. Then, I explore how the creation of a digital cartography proposes alternatives to analysis, description and fixing/capturing, through a process of tracing or mapping the em-

bodied research process. The cartography becomes a place to keep re-searching and re-iterating my research questions and thus, underscoring its onto-epistemic nature, plays a role in both articulating and inevitably transforming the unfolding artistic and pedagogical practices. At the end of the paper, I put together a set of principles that begin to take shape through the embodied practice of performance-making and that inform my teaching.

Movement of Embodied Research

My understanding of movement practice as research draws from Spatz's notion that embodied research entails continual movement across a technical/epistemic boundary. Spatz describes the research journey as cyclical and reversible (Spatz 2020,7). Research, according to Spatz, moves first in the direction of 'opening,' which is characterised by 'entering, unfolding, delving into, uncovering, expanding, drawing near,' and then in the opposite direction of 'closure,' which is a movement of 'folding up, getting out of, gaining distance' (Spatz 2020, 7). This conceptualisation of research and its continually moving boundary or edge creates for the researcher an ever-expanding field. As Spatz writes: 'Knowledge that recedes from awareness is 'behind' us, while 'in front' of us are new fields of knowing that only become possible because of what has been automatised. As we move forward into these new fields, they too gradually become sedimented and 'deposit' into the known' (Spatz 2020, 2–3).

Crossing through boundaries of known and unknown[2], either in the direction of opening or closure is, according to Spatz, an essential strategy for 'getting at things in different ways,' for arriving in new fields, and undoing entrenched colonially-informed, epistemological hierarchies (Spatz 2020, 15). In this paper, I reflect on how my movement research process, as part of my larger study, begins to suggest the second-mentioned direction of research, that of closure, which Spatz characterises as 'the direction of *teaching*, *pedagogy*, and *mastery*' (Spatz 2020, 7). This approach, which aims to excavate my own embodied practice, also echoes Achille Mbembe and Ngugi wa Thiong'o insofar as decolonisation is concerned with 'questions of writing and teaching – writing oneself, teaching oneself' (Mbembe 2015, n. p.). Emerging from the research project is an unfolding movement practice that begins to offer 'relatively stable, repeatable and transmissible' pathways of technique (Spatz 2015, 32–35). These pathways become sedimented over time and suggest a pedagogy as my choreographic and teaching practices become increasingly entangled in a larger cyclical (and reversible) movement research journey.

A Movement Pedagogy in Retrograde

I borrow from Spatz (2015, 232) the notion of 'embodied technique' as that which is relatively stable, repeatable and transmissible in embodied practice. The tracing of pathways of embodied technique in my own movement practice does not claim to have invented a new, decolonised technique. Rather, these tracings grapple with ways to think about and name differently what many South African contemporary dance practitioners are already doing. To name experiments not as responses to colonial aesthetics, but for what they are: epistemic endeavours that transform practices and open up possibilities for new techniques, principles, and fields (Spatz 2020). The notion of an unfolding or emerging pedagogy is a way of understanding how choreography circulates across bodies, places and times as practice, rather primarily in terms of a performer-audience relationship. It then becomes possible to imagine that choreographic praxis, as embodied research tracing, functions according to its own logic and operates and circulates according to its own rate of multiplication, as its embodied

techniques begin to sediment as potentially new pedagogies. In this way, my research project responds to the critical question, borrowed from Friedman (2012, 101), whose work on dance we are or should be teaching in the context of seeking transformational practices in South African education, including universities. This critical question relates to broader epistemological concerns regarding the content and methodologies of teaching and learning. Grappling with these questions through performance-making, I noticed the biggest shifts over time in my teaching practice. In seeking to trouble representationalism, the pathways of technique emerging from my experimental practice included embodied ways of engaging with disorientation, witnessing, reactivating the body through touch, 'story-ness'[3] as unfolding suggestions of stories, composition as relational and ecological by way of a disappearing subject, and beginnings as interruptions of narrative flow (Johnstone 2022, 147). These emergent techniques have become part of the lexicon of my teaching practice, and have become ways to invite students into movement research.

The idea of an unfolding pedagogy, I suggest, reworks understandings of continuity and discontinuity and disrupts conventional understandings of curriculum as a linear and scaffolded organisation of concepts. South African dancer-psychologist Nobonke van Tonder[4] proposes that this entails a practice of ontology, working with 'what is' and challenging the teleological reach of the material, its idea of progress. This idea has much in common with the experience of learning improvisation and learning as improvisation, which Simon Rose describes as 'ongoing, and continuously changing through its processes,' rather than 'a fixed object of study' (Rose 2017, 162). Or, as William E. Doll writes from the perspective of postmodern education, a transformative curriculum needs 'the 'right amount' of *indeterminacy, anomaly, inefficiency, chaos, disequilibrium, dissipation, lived experience*' (Doll 1993, 176 [emphasis in original]). These understandings of becoming and ongoing continuous change offer a powerful antithesis to dominant, Western and modernist conceptions of time as 'uniform succession, as infinite, constant and irreversible' (Critchley 2016, 19). Simon Critchley adds that time in this modernist conception is figured as an arrow 'pointing towards the future; it is future-oriented, progressivist, indeed revolutionary' (2016, 19). An alternative politics of time, according to Critchley, proposes a 'pluriform, finite, intermittent idea of time' or *times*, that 'do not come in quick succession: the future is no later than the past and the present is something inherently unstable. Times are happening at the same time' (Critchley 2016, 21). Decolonial thinkers, in their unpacking of the entanglement of modernity with coloniality, take up the critique of the universality of time. As Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2017) explains, linear time as a basic assumption of Western epistemology (Santos 2017, 159–160) is questioned and replaced by the understanding that there is no universal simultaneity, or absolute time and space (Santos 2017, 35). Vázquez argues that chronology and 'chronological narratives are at the heart of the modernity/coloniality systems of oppression' (Vázquez 2006, 2). He writes that 'the critique of modern time shows that modernity is the time that rejects the past, affirms the present as the site of the real, and construes the future in the semblance of a teleology' (Vázquez 2006, 4).

The idea of a retrograde logic of practice endorses this critique of a linear and teleological attitude towards time in order to suggest how choreography and movement research as a decolonial praxis may foreground the emergence of techniques and story-ness. Attending to emergence or unfolding of embodied techniques disrupts the linearity of preconceived stories and ideas and unsettles colonial scripts of dancing bodies and predetermined, colonially-informed pedagogies. Time, as described by Merleau-Ponty in 1945, is 'that which one inevitably encounters on the path to subjectivity' (qtd. in Mbembe 2017, 120). Mbembe links time to subjectivity, noting of time, memory and remembrance that 'each fundamentally constitutes a form of the presence of the past (and of its traces, remains, and fragments) within consciousness' (2017,

121). He writes that 'time is experienced by attending to the senses (seeing, hearing, touching, feeling, tasting)'[5] (Mbembe 2017, 120).

Yet the understanding of subjectivity that emerges from these accounts and in my tracings of embodied techniques, does not privilege the individual human agent who is, in Erin Manning's words, volitional and intentional (Manning 2016, 140). Rather, Manning –who views subjectivity from an autistic (neurodiverse) perspective – argues that 'subjectivity is in the making, in the field. Subjectivity is not felt as predetermining: it is connected to the field of experience as it in-forms it' (2016, 140). Subjectivity is thus predicated on processual concepts of time and becoming. Manning argues that reading the subject not as activator but as emergent in the act or event (an idea she takes up from Alfred North Whitehead's process philosophy), places the emphasis not on the 'continuity of becoming' so much as the 'becoming of continuity' (2016, 135). My understanding of an unfolding practice and pedagogy is informed by Manning's claim that 'to see the potential of worlds in the making … involves becoming more attuned to event-time, the nonlinear lived duration of experience in the making' (2016, 15).

The 'becoming of continuity,' or the disruption of a linear approach to time, can function as an embodied technique to rethink the forward flow of narrative and, in this case, a scaffolded and predetermined movement pedagogy. Positioning learning spaces as instances of embodied research foregrounds the unfolding, emergent nature of artistic practice and draws attention to the body and embodiment as places of inquiry. I concede that an unfolding movement pedagogy is a necessarily tenuous construct, its logic held together by 'slender threads:[6] 'Everything functions according to a principle of incompletion. As a result, there is no ordered continuity between the present, the past, and the future. And there is no genealogy – only an unfurling of temporal series that are practically disjointed, linked by a multiplicity of slender threads' (Mbembe 2017, 148).

Cause and effect are not approached as parts of a predetermined story; rather, I try to imagine how movement research might offer a place and a practice that allows new, not-predetermined meanings and techniques to emerge.

Mapping an Embodied Research Process: A Cartography

In my search for appropriate tools and sources for an indeterminate movement research process, I explored the notion of mapping or tracing, in an effort to avoid capturing or 'fixing.' The act of tracing resulted in the creation of a digital cartography, which assembled various writings and other research documents (photo, video, audio) in order to keep track of and tune into what my practice was doing. By tracing the pathways of technique in my own unfolding practice, my aim was not to create a representation or even an archive of the work, but rather to expose some of the deep structure[7] and non-linearity of embodied practice and research. Through this process of tracing, I found that the greatest shifts took place in my teaching practice when it was treated as a place that provided opportunities for techniques to be repeated, to be clarified or to be used to pose further research questions for embodied practice. The practice of assembling research documents, which was a collaborative process with dance artist and web designer Julia de Rosenwerth, created a thinking place that then informed the writing of a thesis that was completed alongside the cartography at the same time that it continued to shape and transform my unfolding pedagogical practice. Mignolo cautions that the practice of cartography, the drawing of maps and borders, has often been linked to colonial practices, and specifically the colonisation of space (Mignolo 2018, 362). I borrow the term cartography here, however, from philosopher Rosi Braidotti who describes cartography as 'a theoretically-based and politically informed account of the present that aims at tracking the production of

knowledge and subjectivity and to expose power both as entrapment (potestas) and as empowerment (potential)' (Braidotti 2019, 33). Mapping emerged as a metaphor for keeping track of the unfolding research journey, as well as recording the cyclical, deeply layered and non-linear nature of this journey. The cartography functions as a map that charts instances of embodied practice that were part of the research journey over time, and also reveals how each new project or dance work repeatedly returns to the same and similar questions. This resonates with Susan Melrose, Stephanie Sachsenmaier and Rosemary Butcher's insight that new work, new writing, or in this case each new instance of working with the research documents offers its maker(s) 'something [un]-resolved in her own mind' (Lyotard 1991, 53, qtd. in Melrose et al. 2015, 92). Making new work or assembling research materials feels akin to making the same work over and over again. The cartography offers momentary stabilisations[8] that I think of as landmarks in an emerging logic, while realising that alternative configurations of the research documents, and thus alternative narratives and logics, remain possible and viable. The cartography reveals the collaborative character of this research and the intricate networks of practice that run through it and reveal its micropolitics. This is in line with Braidotti's notion that 'knowledge production is multiple and collective' (2019, 33). The work of embodied practice, which I extend here to the unfolding of a movement pedagogy, involves thinking and doing alongside and with others. Each page of the online cartography re-visits and re-iterates one of the dance works or projects that formed part of my artistic research process as it searches for its own choreographic logic. The techniques emerging from the artistic work (disorientation, witnessing, story-ness, interruptions of narrative logic, touch as reactivation, and the disappearance of the subject in an ecological and relational composition) are re-visited in the assembling of research documents.

As an example, two of the projects that were part of this process are *New Dance Lab* (*NDL*) and *Any Body Dance Lab* (*ABDL*). Both projects centred on the question of how to create space for dance to happen and be presented, and aimed to form networks of practitioners. Both projects exposed some of the practices that circulate around and through my own movement and choreographic practice. For *NDL*, practitioners were invited to present five minutes of their most recent movement research. The project included public performance, but also sharing and feedback moments among the group of artists. *ABDL* consisted of six weekends of workshops followed by public performances of works created during these sessions. Both projects explore how embodied knowledge is shared and transmitted among practitioners and recognise that there are multiple fields in which the knowledge associated with these outcomes circulates, such as pedagogical practice, choreography and performance. Both projects also gravitated towards the term 'laboratory,' which can be defined as a place 'where the researcher actively modifies society by directly and literally altering the landscape of possibilities for action' (Latour 1983, qtd. in Spatz 2015, 164). Our call for *NDL* in April 2017 read as follows: 'The platform seeks to attract progressive and experimental new dance works and invites choreographers and artists working with dance to propose short new dance works that engage with risk, immediacy, experimentation and new research' (*NDL*, Call for Proposals).

The framing of this invitation indicates a desire to demarcate an epistemological project and an epistemic space, a space for embodied research that resists the teleological reach of a predetermined plan. The notion of immediacy here relates to the idea mentioned earlier that embodied knowledge is transmitted *before* the intervention of language (Spatz 2020, xvii). Spatz argues that embodied practices contain an 'epistemic impulse,' which suggests that even when these practices take place outside academic spaces and without academic support, the research 'is already in circulation among artists and practitioners' (Spatz 2015, 224).

Conclusion

Through the tracing of embodied practice in the form of cartography, the notion of 'mapping' offers a way to track, write and re-write danced narratives and instances of practice shared among a community of practitioners, of which I have offered an example above. Following Manning (2016), artistic research, or what Manning herself calls 'research-creation' can be seen as working 'against method' (Manning 2016, 26). Yet, I also found that artistic research can be radically *for* methodology insofar as it challenges normative research approaches. The online cartography emerged in the search for a space that could both hold the artistic works that were part of the research and act reflexively to track an emerging logic of practice, an unfolding pedagogy. Assembling various forms of writing, photos and videography, I found that the intra-action proposed by these research documents begin to propose, in Manning's words, 'concrete assemblages for rethinking the very question of what is at stake in pedagogy, in practice, and in collective experimentation' (2016, 27). This 'creates an opening for what Moten and Harney conceptualise as the undercommons: it creates conditions for new ways of encountering study – forms and forces of intellectuality that cut across normative accounts of what it means to know' (Manning 2016, 27). The methodological shifts proposed by the process of mapping an embodied practice, in this case through the cartography, thus offers political interventions within normative academic and praxis paradigms, and as I suggest here, disrupts the idea of a predetermined and linearly conceived curriculum.

I concluded the cartography with *From here…* , an artistic statement where I begin to group the various instances of embodied practice into techniques revolving around the exercise of agency, relationality, story-ness, discontinuity and disorientation. These reveal how the embodied techniques traced in the research begin to take shape as principles that inform my artistic and pedagogical practice. The cartography, like the research process, moves in two directions, to recall Spatz once more: first in the direction of opening up, and then in the direction of closing as an emerging pedagogy begins to take shape and unfold its logic in retrograde.

From here… an emerging pedagogy
Yes to undoing technique
Yes to remaking and reclaiming technique
Yes to stating a research question
Yes to risk
Yes to immediacy
Yes to discontinuity and slender threads of logic
Yes to beginning over and over again
Yes to witnessing and being witnessed
Yes to disorientation
Yes to disappearing from the composition
No to using my body as a surface for inscription
Yes to re-initiating motion
Yes to indeterminacy[9]

List of weblinks

Cartography homepage:
https://kristinajohnstone.com/

New Dance Lab:
https://kristinajohnstone.com/new-dance-lab/

Any Body Dance Lab:
https://kristinajohnstone.com/any-body-dance-lab/

From here:
https://kristinajohnstone.com/from-here/

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Notes

1 This doctoral research project was completed at Wits School of Arts and received support from the National Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences in collaboration with the South African Humanities Deans Association.

2 Important in Spatz's concept is the continual movement of and across the research edge. This concept challenges 'binary models of the research edge as the place where the known meets the unknown' (Spatz 2020, 2).

3 I borrow the term story-ness from improvisation teacher Julyen Hamilton.

4 I draw from conversations held during the embodied research processes shared with collaborators. All such conversations that were included in my final PhD thesis adhered to the University's ethical guidelines for research.

5 The senses could be further distinguished by taking into account additional senses such as pain, temperature, kinesthesia and proprioception.

6 Mbembe attributes 'slender threads' of logic to the 'ghostly paradigm' in black novelistic writing, which he describes as an intertwining of the living and the dead.

7 The term deep structure is borrowed from the field of machine learning. See for example, Ian Goodfellow et al. (2016)

8 The notion of momentary stabilisations is borrowed from Karen Barad (2003; 2011), who reworks conventional understanding of cause and effect through the concept of the agential cut.

9 From here... is written in the form of a manifesto following Yvonne Rainer's 1964 No Manifesto

THE SCIENTIFIC LAB AS STUDIO/THE STUDIO AS SCIENTIFIC LAB: EXPLORING PRACTICE-LED MICROBIAL BIOART IN A DECOLONIAL CONTEXT

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This paper discusses the field of bioart, which explores the intersection of art and biotechnology. It raises questions about life, bioethics, and environmental interactions. The author's praxis involves hands-on experimentation with living and non-living materials in scientific labs, resulting in artistic outcomes. The concept of "intra-action" is explored, emphasising a reciprocal relationship between the artist and the material. The paper highlights the increasing collaboration between artists and scientists, leading to the establishment of bioart labs and art-science programs. The author's own bioart praxis involves working with bacteria and yeast to create biofibers resembling human skin, which are then used to produce casts referencing colonial histories. The challenges and experimental nature of working with living materials are also discussed.

Introduction

What constitutes life? Who controls life? What are the bioethical implications of life manipulation? What will be the consequences of such biotechnological interventions? How will these biotechnologies affect interactions with the environment? How can we create with consideration and care? How to think and practise with life otherwise? Can we imagine other forms of living and non/living[1] beings prompting different practices and patterns of thinking that, rather than allowing us to live as we do, will change us instead? How to live with contamination and its risks? By bringing new methodologies and materials into the artistic realm, how can artists play a role in critically and creatively shaping our current situation of ecological precarity?

These are but some of the phenomenological questions that I have found myself asking over the past six years, during which I have been working under the umbrella term "biological art" or "bioart." Bioart can be defined as a "cultural, humanities and art based practice that deals with the technologies, issues and physical materials of biotechnology" (Franklin 2014, 52). It involves artmaking practices involving the application of the life sciences or biotechnologies, known as "wet-biological practices" (Catts and Zurr 2008; Da Costa and Philip 2008; Hauser 2008a), and is often, but not exclusively, conducted in scientific laboratories using (and abusing) approved scientific processes and protocols. Working in a scientific lab offers artists an experiential hands-on approach, where they can engage with living and non/living forms and work *with them* to produce artistic outcomes. Implicit within these art forms is the physical presentation of biological life or its processes (Catts 2009, 1) through the use of living and non/living matter as artmaking media. Artworks can make use of media such as cell tissue culture, extracted DNA, bacteria, yeasts, invertebrates, insects, mycelium, plants, and animals.

My praxis, which is located in a fertile node straddling art and microbiology, has led me to discover that bioart research is grounded in the making process, which entails experimentation, risk and innovation. It involves finding ways of working with existing biomaterials and producing new ones; introducing speculative ways and methods of working with living and non/living matter; and using interdisciplinary approaches to arrive at research findings that are rooted in practical activities and processes. This experiential, hands-on approach allows for forms of engagement with living and non/living forms that entail working *with them* to produce artistic outcomes. Such hands-on practice is usually connected to simultaneous processes of thinking, creating methodologies that encompass thinking while doing and doing while thinking. For me, this focus on process that works in tandem with theory is closely aligned with Practice-Led Research (PLR) approaches within the creative arts, as it allows for creative experience of the multi-species exchanges and collaborations that often remain solely within the realm of the theoretical.

In the preceding paragraphs, I have specifically used the phrase "with them" to differentiate between the use and manipulation of organisms to one's own artistic ends, and a more reciprocal relationship between the artist and microbial matter, where experimentation is, ideally, undertaken not to achieve control, but rather to allow for attentiveness to, and collaboration with, the organisms' propensity to transform. This reciprocal relationship can be related to Karen Barad's notions of "intra-action" and "intra-activity" (2003). Pointing out that the term "interaction" makes dichotomous distinctions between subjects and objects, Barad coined the term "intra-action" that, she argues, dissolves the "constructed boundary between the 'object' and the 'agencies of observation'" (Barad 2007, 817). Barad also converts the term "agency" into "agentiality," which she proposes as a "doing" and "intracting"; an unfixed, non-anthropocentric process of enactment. As she suggests:

> It is through specific intra-actions that a differential sense of being is enacted in the ongoing ebb and flow of agency .... 'Intra-action' underscores the agency of matter; matter is a substance in its intra-active becoming – not a thing but a doing, a congealing of agency ... a stabilizing and destabilizing process of intra-activity. (Barad 2007, 817, 151).

Matter is thus understood as a discursive production in which the materialisation of bodies and the production of meaning are interdependent. This intra-active, hands-on approach raises issues of Bio-philosophy, Bio-politics and Bio-ethics, as well as questions pertinent to contemporary situations such as human relationships to the environment (climate change, pollution, health, sustainability, and the COVID pandemic) and their links to what Françoise Verges terms "the Racial Capitalocene" (2017).



Figure 1: Donna Franklin, Fibre Reactive, 2004. *Pycnoporus coccineus*, silk, wood, Perspex. 198cm x 70cm x 70cm. Photographer: Robert Frith. Copyright permission courtesy of SymbioticA).

At the Interface between Art and Science

As Mark Roughley, Kathryn Smith and Caroline Wilkinson note, collaborations between artists and scientists are increasingly becoming a feature of the global artistic and academic landscape (2019, 226–227). Traditionally, art and scientific disciplines have been seen not only as unconnected but as diametrically opposed. In this historical perspective, art is usually employed in the service of science, with artists using their skills to illustrate scientific, medical or biological ideas and forms, such as in botanical drawings and anatomical illustrations.

However, life – and by this I mean living and non/living matter – is becoming a raw material and a subject for artistic production. This is manifest in interdisciplinary approaches taking the form of art-science collaborations that have emerged in the global North over approximately the last 30 years. Here, artists and scientists collaborate to explore the creative possibilities presented by the intersection of these two fields, in which art and science are situated as equally valid knowledge systems.



Figure 2: Leora Farber, 2018. Cellulose fibre. Photographs: Anthea Pokroy

From the early 1990s, bioart – as a form of artistic and scientific practice – has grown from a niche interest in which formative works were produced by bioartists such as Orlan, Stellarc and Edouardo Kac, to a legitimate field of creative and theoretical research. Internationally, exhibitions such as *semipermeable* (2013, Sydney) and *Fermenting Feminisms* (2019) (among many others); global art-science exhibition spaces such as ARS Electronica, Experimental Digital Arts (EDA), Arts Catalyst, ANAT, SymbioticA and the Science Gallery. Moreover, contemporary bioartists such as Anna Dumitriu, Anicka Yi, Donna Franklin, Neri Oxman, Oron Catts, Ionat Zurr, Pia Interlandi, Tal Danino, Peta Clancy, Helen Pynor, Lia Giraud, Heather Barnett, Tarsh Bates and Kira O'Reilly feature prominently in the global art arena (Figure 1). These interdisciplinary creative collaborations have also given rise to the establishment of dedicated bioart labs[2] and art-science postgraduate degree programmes in Higher Education institutions, notably in Europe, the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia. While artists are often limited to writing for journals that focus on Visual Culture or Art History, working at the interface between science and art offers practitioners more platforms for the publication of textual outputs, in journals that specialise in art-science collaborations such as *Leonardo*, *Antennae*, and *Breathe*. Given the synergies between bioart and PLR, journals that specialise in PLR approaches to praxis like the *Journal for Artistic Research (JAR) and Ellipses [...] Journal for Creative Research* add to the range of publication platforms.



Figure 3: Leora Farber, 2018. Cellulose fibre. Photographs: Anthea Pokroy

Because the range of art-science collaboration encompasses a plethora of diverse practices and media, in this paper I focus on work produced under the umbrella term

"biotechnological art" or "bioart," while acknowledging that the term is contested.[3]

Transformative Encounters

I now turn to my bioart praxis, which, to date, has involved the use of pathogenic bacteria, yeasts, mycelium and *Physarum polycephalum* (slime mould). In bioart practices, emphasis is typically placed on process and materials, but for me, these are not ends in themselves. I wish to stress that meaning and matter intersect; that *matter carries meaning*, so that matter and discourse are integrally conjoined. This relation is, as Helen Palmer and Vicky Hunter put it, a form of "worlding": "Worlding is a … blending of the material and the semiotic that removes the boundaries between subject and environment, or perhaps between persona and topos" (2018). It involves "a radical dismantling of the boundaries between human and nonhuman agencies, the social and the natural, and above all between matter and discourse" (Oppermann 2014, 56). The translation of matter into visual form can therefore be seen as a critical and creative visual response to theoretical debates taking place in contemporary scientific discourse, as well as in the visual arts and Humanities, and in the intersections between them.





Figures 4 & 5: Leora Farber, *disquieting domesticities/ vestiges of violence (or, the ghost in the house)* installation, 2021. Cellulose fibre, lightbox. Photographs: Michael Hall





Figures 6 & 7: Leora Farber, *intimate presences/affective absences (or, the snake within)* installation, 2020. Cellulose fibre, lightbox. Photographs: Anthea Pokroy

For example, theoretically speaking, my bioart praxis brings together a combination of current debates in a range of discourses across the sciences, visual arts, visual culture, and disciplines in the Humanities – specifically post-humanism, post-anthropocentrism, and New Feminist Materialist theory; as well as feminist Affect theory, Spectral studies (specifically Derridean Hauntology), Settler colonialism, and decoloniality. I draw on the writings of Deleuzian feminist philosophers such as Rosi Braidotti (2002; 2006; 2013), Claire Colebrook (2014), and Elizabeth Grosz (2008; 2011), as well as New Materialist Feminist scholars such as Barad (2003; 2007; 2012) and Donna Haraway (2003; 2008; 2010), who, like post-humanist theorists, offer non-anthropocentric approaches to ontology. These theorists consider life as material and processual, dynamic, indeterminate, and enacted through multiple connections and interactions; an excessive force of transformation in which the human and non/human are enmeshed. The Western notion of humanity is considered a concept that can be reconstituted in ways that favour multiple forms of humanity in trans-species alliances that are based on diversity, complexity, and hybridisation, and an ethics of engagement with the non/human based on empathy and care.

For me, bioart praxis, and specifically the enmeshed, intimate engagement with living and non/living material matter that it allows for, offers a space for readings of the work through any or all of the abovementioned, seemingly diverse theoretical fields. Yet although they offer multiple lenses through which meaning may be discerned, collectively they present an overarching theoretical paradigm that is underpinned by the decentring of the white, heterosexual male human subject, and of Eurocentric notions of speciesism, thus calling into question the hierarchical binary oppositions – such as 'human' and 'non-human,' 'self' and 'other,' mind and matter, subjectivity and objectivity – upon which Western discourse is based.

In 2017, I began experimenting with a biofibre which grows from the symbiotic action of the bacteria *Gluconacetobacter xylinus* and yeast, which feed off a mixture of tea and sugar, forming a gelatinous, cellulose-based biofilm that floats on the container's air-liquid interface. Once the biofilm had grown to the desired thickness, it

was removed from the liquid, cleaned and dehydrated. The dried biofibre remains in organic stasis and regenerates if rehydrated. In its dried state, the biofibre bears an uncanny resemblance to discarded human skin (Figures 2 and 3).

From 2017 to 2019, I conducted practical research into the scientific properties of bacteria and yeast to develop the growth of the biofibres. This involved extensive experimentation, which was time and labour intensive, and carried a high risk of failure. I carried out a series of tests, observing how these caused variations in the biofibres' growth patterns, density, colour and structure. For example, I grew them under different environmental conditions; used various kinds of tea; substituted honey for sugar and introduced materials such as cotton wool into the biofilm for tensile strength. Once I had working knowledge of these growth procedures, I used the dried biofibre as a material to produce casts or 'impressions' of domestic objects, chosen specifically for their references to English and Dutch colonialism in South Africa. (Figures 4, 5, 6, 7)

Working with a medium that is both material and, given its translucency and lightness, seemingly immaterial, became a way of thinking and working through the hauntings of colonial histories via storied matter. The impressions reference various design styles, periods and surface patterning. They include items taken from Chinese porcelain and English bone china; some feature blue and white patterns of Chinese origin, such as the willow pattern, which the British copied in their production of eighteenth-century porcelain, and the Dutch reproduced in their 'Delft blue' porcelain. These designs have become domestic 'classics' in many post-settler colonies. The impressions thus resonate as spectral traces of colonial and apartheid legacies that haunt domestic interiors and broader individual and collective imaginations in postcolonial South Africa. They carry hauntological resonances of British and Dutch Imperialism and colonialism – the very mechanisms that drove the enculturation of capital. If read against this historical backdrop of dispossession, exploitation, displacement and precarity, the impressions may recall uncanny spectres of disquietude, vestiges of violence that continue to inhabit domestic spaces.

Use of the biofibres as a casting material also involved considerable experimentation. There are no training manuals, workshops, or online courses that one can attend to learn how to work with living or non/living material – everything depends on trial and error, play and, finally, a conscious decision to 'let go' of preconceived ideas of what constitutes 'success' and rather to embrace 'failure.' The research methodology is therefore explorative, an investigative process in which variables result in unpredictable outcomes rather than prove a predetermined hypothesis.

The steep learning curve included learning to work *with* (rather than *against*) the mutable qualities of the material: its unforeseeable behaviours, its propensity to change structure, colour and form over time and or react unpredictably when other substances were applied to it. Another challenge was how to make the impressions keep a semblance of shape and form once removed from the object – they tended to collapse because the material, even when relatively thick, was not strong enough to support a 3D form. External factors such as moisture in the air caused the material to become soft and soggy, whereas in dry weather, it became brittle. Another challenge was how to work with the fragile material without it breaking, tearing or fragmenting. I specifically worked with biofibres that were less than 1mm in thickness, as these conveyed the optimal sense of weightlessness, immateriality and translucency. The processes of growing the biofilms, feeding them, ensuring that the room temperature was consistently set at 27 degrees centigrade, watching for signs of contamination, cleaning them, drying them, coaxing them onto and extracting them from the object and painting onto their surfaces thus necessitated extreme care at every stage. To invoke Harraway's term for the process of opening oneself to others, to become an agent, and to care, I was "*response-able*" to them (2008). I experimented with finding ways of delineating pattern on their surfaces using painting, printing and drawing techniques, building up surfaces into relief, scraping away or piercing the material,



Figures 8–11: Leora Farber, experimental drawings with bacteria on agar in petri dishes, 2019. Photographs: Anthea Pokroy

and using patterns from paper serviettes, which formed a physical and metaphorical 'tissue' or 'membrane' over the skin. Many of these processes refer to domestic practices historically associated with women and support feminist and gendered readings of the work.

My experimentation with biofibres made me curious to see if working with bacteria as media could be extended. This led to my collaborating with the microbiologist, Prof Tobias Barnard (Director, University of Johannesburg Water and Health Centre, Faculty of Health Sciences), who introduced me to a technique of painting with pigmented bacteria onto agar in petri dishes. I also did a residency at the SymbioticA Centre of Biological Art, University of Western Australia, which enabled me to work in a certified level 2 Physical Containment (PC2) microbiology lab in the School of Biomedical Sciences. Here, I extended the work done in Prof Barnard's lab from flat 2D bacterial drawings in petri dishes into 3D casts of domestic objects made from bacterial agar. (Figures 8-11)

I found the experience of working in a scientific lab simultaneously challenging, stimulating, alienating and intimidating. It gave me the freedom to explore techniques and practices usually reserved for scientists in an artmaking context. I was trained in lab practices, given access to equipment and facilities that would otherwise have been unavailable to me as an artist and provided with scientific and technical expertise tailored to the specifics of my project. However, as an artist accustomed to working in a spontaneous manner that involves messiness and imprecision, working in a PC2 microbiology lab opened up a new world to me – one governed by strictly defined practices, protocols and procedures that needed to be vigilantly adhered to so as to ensure absolute distinctions between sterility and contamination. These protocols centre on issues of containment and control over pathological microbes that exhibit "disobedient behaviours": they threaten to become dangerously uncontrollable, having the potential to override borders and boundaries, to 'take over' and to 'contaminate.' I became hyper-aware of how, in the hyper-regulated environment of the lab, every action necessitated self-regulation and self-control.

The work I produced comprised impressions made from a mixture of agar and bacterial nutrient, onto which live, pigmented pathogenic bacteria were painted. Inscribed into, imprinted onto, or infused with the jelly-like substrate, the bacteria grew unpredictably and uncontrollably in response to the patterns or surface applications that I attempted to create for them. Occasionally, they grew according to the patterns that I had delineated for them, but mostly, their movement – which could be described as "haptic performativity" (Bates 2019, 36) – was so extreme that I could not recognise the initial pattern that I had rendered. In time, I came to realise that, unlike conventional artmaking media, bacteria are not inert matter but have their own agency and life force. Thus, rather than being the product of my creative efforts alone, the work became a collaboration between the microbes and myself. My intra-actions with the microbes could be read as 'transformative encounters' that happened 'with' the agencies of the microbes in a dynamic process of intra-activity. I became a co-author, a participant in an organic, unscripted, sometimes asymmetric collaboration that necessitated my relinquishing of artistic autonomy and control. (Figures 12–15)



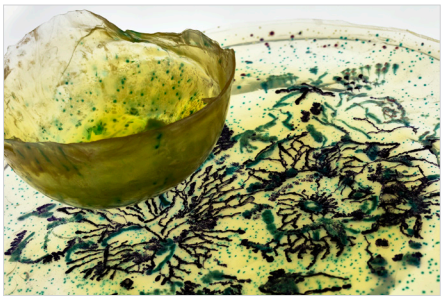






Figure 12–15: Leora Farber, cultured *colonies/colonial cultures*, 2021. Agar and bacteria. Photographs: Bo Wong

During the making process, I was intensely aware of my embodied relationship with the organisms themselves. Despite the rigid scientific protocols I adhered to, and despite my knowledge of their being pathogenic, my interaction with the microbes comprised unsettling yet pleasurable sensual intimacies and corporeal entanglements. I experienced a sense of enmeshment with the microbes through sight, smell and tactile experience. My intra-actions with them could be read as corporeal entanglements

that disrupted conceptions of myself as an autonomous, contained, and unified subject. Experiencing this sense of dissolution of the ego, of the boundaries between self and other, made me acutely aware that this was an intraspecies form of practice that, for me, generated new modes of coexistence. The repeated 'eruption' of the microbes into vibrantly coloured communities offered an opportunity to reflect on my entanglements with the invisible multitude of ecologies that shape the world in ongoing processes of intra-activity (Barad 2003, 823). I was also reminded of Marietta Radomska's concept of uncontainability as that which "exposes the excessive character of life: its potential for surplus and transformation that cause life to exceed both the material boundaries of entities and the conceptual frames and established meanings" (2016, 32).

The translucent casts appear as though made of layers of exposed subcutaneous tissue. Devoid of a protective epidermis, the material matter seems ethereal, almost spectral. They restlessly oscillate in-between states of emergence and becoming; life and death; materiality and immateriality; human and non/human; presence and absence; being and non/being; form and formlessness. Radomska's remarks on the work of other bioartists are applicable here:

> Bioartworks help us to uncover these porosities and blurred boundaries: they expose life as becoming … as non-teleological processes of change, and as intensities that do not compose an external force enlivening inert matter but, instead, are constitutive of matter as such. Uncontainable life is not modelled after the life of the human or any other organism and thus, it is not limited like the life of discrete entities. Rather, uncontainable life dwells in the sphere of the in-between: it is processual, dynamic, and multiplicitous. (2016, 32)

In 2021, I produced five videos in which photographs and video footage of the work made with biofibre and in agar were edited using animation techniques. Animation was used to imaginatively simulate the growth of the microbes while suggesting the mutability of the material and its ability to transform. As noted above, in their material states, the impressions already occupy an ever-changing, liminal space of becoming, slipping in-between corporeality and ephemerality. This sense of liminality is heightened as they are transposed into the video medium, which foregrounds the transientness of light, time and space. In their filmic reiterations, the impressions appear and disappear across the screen as ephemeral, ethereal, transient forms (which often dissolve into formlessness); they become fleeting semblances of presence which simultaneously unfold into absence. Through these precarious 'things' that are barely things, one is invited to try and grasp the ungraspable – fugitive, fragmented remembrances of familiarity, strangeness, comfort, dis-ease, intimacy, distance, vulnerability, trauma, complicity and loss. Translating the material forms into moving images became another way of breaking boundaries between artistic disciplines, prompting me to think about how such translations can go beyond documentation and necessitate reconsideration of the work as a new piece. (Figure 16) (Figure 17) (Figure 18) (Figure 19) (Figure 20)



Figure 16: Leora Farber, 2020-2021, *ghosted matter*, video still. 21:14. https://movingcube.uj.ac.za/watch/leora-farber-ghosted-matter-phantom-hurt-and-other-chimera/extract-of-ghosted-matter-2020-2021/



Figure 17: Leora Farber, 2021, *phantom hurt*, video still. 8:00. https://movingcube.uj.ac.za/watch/leora-farber-ghosted-matter-phantom-hurt-and-other-chimera/extract-of-phantom-hurt-2021/

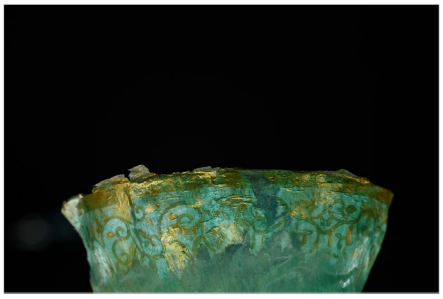


Figure 18: Leora Farber, 2021, *chimera*, video still. 10:05. https://movingcube.uj.ac.za/watch/leora-farber-ghosted-matter-phantom-hurt-and-other-chimera/extract-of-chimera-2021/

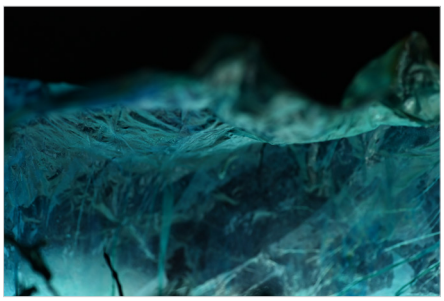


Figure 19: Leora Farber, 2021, *chimera*, video still. 10:05. https://movingcube.uj.ac.za/watch/leora-farber-ghosted-matter-phantom-hurt-and-other-chimera/extract-of-dark-matter-2021/

Reflecting on my engagements with bioart over the last six years and the challenges these have presented has led me to realise that the work has been important in

pushing boundaries on many fronts. As a multi-dimensional, self-initiated, curiosity-driven inquiry that necessitates high investment and the strong possibility of risks, it entails being open to new ways of approaching the material and making process. These involved letting go of artistic autonomy and agency, and placing myself in a vulnerable position where I experienced a loss of control and a blurring of differentiation between self and not-self. The many practical and artistic challenges I faced were sustained by curiosity, perseverance, determination, and an inherent belief that the process would lead to meaningful encounters, with moments of excitement fuelled by discoveries.

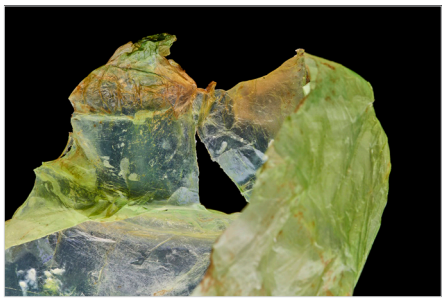


Figure 20 :Leora Farber, 2021, *animacies*, video still. 08:12. https://movingcube.uj.ac.za/watch/leora-farber-ghosted-matter-phantom-hurt-and-other-chimera/extract-of-animacies-2021/

There are several bioartists working internationally with bacteria and biofibres, notably UK-based bio-artist Mellissa Fischer, who produces "microbiological portraits" – casts of her body and face over which bacteria taken from her skin grow;[4] Suzanne Lee, the creative director of Bio-Couture – a London-based company which investigates the making of clothing through the use of biofibres;[5] and Australian bioartists Donna Franklin and Gary Cass, whose *Micro/'be'* project investigates the practical and cultural application of biofibres to explore forms of futuristic dress-making and textile technologies.[6] The *Micro/'be'* garments are grown by aerobic fermentation wherein colonies of *acetobacter* bacteria produce a biofilm as they convert wine into vinegar. (Figure 21)



Figure 21: Gary Cass & Donna Franklin, 2008. *Alterations, Micro/'be'* Fermented Fashion. Metallic print 69cm x 58cm. Model: Jennieka Chattelle,

In South Africa, it seems that many artists are working with themes of post-humanism but few are working with biomaterials or microbes (or with biotechnological processes in general) in a sustained, critically engaged way. This leads me to think that as bioart seems to be relatively unestablished in South Africa, and on the African continent in general, it offers enormous potential as a field of PLR-based praxis in this country. Its value lies in the ways in which it identifies and develops new or unexplored materials, media and subject matter for creative applications; introduces innovative research techniques, strategies, and modes of thinking; and impels artists to consider the implications of presenting organic materials in gallery contexts. Working with microbes also opens up possibilities for other types of technological mediation such as time-lapse and macro photography, microscopy, as well as Virtual and Augmented Reality.

With the conviction that bioart holds enormous potential to bring about innovative scientific, biotechnological, and scholarly knowledge in visual arts and design practices, and in the South African academy, Professor Tobias Barnard and I have established the Creative Microbiology Research Co-Lab. We have set up a dedicated bioart laboratory in the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture, University of Johannesburg, which functions as a space for MA and PhD students, Post-Doctoral Fellows and Artists-in-Residence to conduct hands-on 'wet biological work,' and for interdisciplinary collaborative projects to take place. Our aim is two-fold: first, to explore how artistic involvement can sit alongside biotechnologies by using a reflexive bioarts praxis model located across the contexts of education, arts and the public sphere to mitigate processes of systemic colonisation. The second aim is to see whether, if introduced critically and in ways that draw on practices originating in the Global North but specifically orientated to the South African context, bioart could promote different, decolonial ways of thinking about what it means to be human, and play a part in revisioning ways of intra-acting with the environment.

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Notes

1. Rather than the term 'non-living,' which sets up a binary opposition between that which is living and that which is not, I adopt Marietta Radomska's use of the term 'the non/living,' in which the components of 'non' and 'living' are separated with a slash (2016, 35). For Radomska, the slash indicates a material processuality of both the organic and inorganic, and points to the enmeshment of the living and non-living. Furthermore, as she notes, the 'non/living' refers to the ambiguities that accompany bioscientific definitions of life – for example, the status of agents such as viruses as life forms are not clear (they need a host cell to replicate, which means that they do not reproduce, which is one of the criteria for an organism to be considered a form of life), while the term also draws attention to the ambivalent entwinement of living and dying (35).
2. Biolabs in universities include:
   • Biofilia Base for Biological Arts, Aalto University, Helsinki. https://www.aalto.fi/en/research-art/biofilia-as-a-fertile-ground-for-research-and-experiment
   • Bio Art Lab, School of Visual Arts, New York. https://bioart.sva.edu
   • Swiss Artists in Labs programme, Zurich University of the Arts. https://www.artistsinlabs.ch/en/residency_programs
   • Institute for Art and Technology, John Moores University, Liverpool. https://www.ljmu.ac.uk/research/centres-and-institutes/institute-of-art-and- technology?utm_medium=301_Redirect&utm_source=/research/centres-and-institutes/art-labs
   • MIT Media Lab. https://www.media.mit.edu
   • Coalesce Centre for Biological Art, University of Buffalo. https://www.buffalo.edu/genomeenvironmentmicrobiome/coalesce.html
3. Given the diversity of the 'genre' in medium and intention, many artists disagree with the use of the term, arguing that it is "reductive" (Catts 2014) or should only be considered as a point of academic departure (Hudson 2014). Given that there are marked differences in approach, media, and content, bioartists frequently object to being lumped together within a single movement. Moreover, their work is differentiated by major philosophical differences: "Some see their work celebrating science – even contributing to it – while others are critiquing a technological dystopia" (Voigt, cited in Franklin 2014, 55). As Jens Hauser notes, 'bioart' is a "proliferating and mutant term … and cannot be nailed down" (2005, 1) because the artwork produced constantly changes in response to developing biotechnologies and scientific practices. I agree with Hauser's observation that the concept of fluidity is inherent in bioartistic practices (2008), and in my praxis, I use the term 'bioart' to refer to the use of wet biology' and the life sciences in an artmaking context.
4. See https://www.vice.com/en/article/53n7d3/living-art-meet-the-woman-making-sculptures-with-bacteria-from-her-skin
5. See https://www.ted.com/speakers/suzanne_lee https://www.designboom.com/design/suzanne-lee-biocouture-growing-textiles/ https://www.designboom.com/design/suzanne-lee-eco-textile-fashion/
6. See https://www.mediamatic.net/en/page/196209/fermented-fashion

RE-IMAGINING THE ROLE OF FEMALE PLAYERS IN THE MAKING AND RESTORING OF THE UHADI MUSICAL BOW

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This paper, written from an African feminist perspective, focuses on the *uhadi* musical bow, a historical instrument found in museums, particularly in Museum Africa in Johannesburg. The mislabelling and lack of contextual information about the uhadi bow in the museum collection hinder the understanding of its origin and the recognition of its makers. The research highlights the role of women as the likely original makers and performers of the *uhadi* bow. It explores the unique features, construction, and playing techniques of the instrument. The study also profiles female *uhadi* players, emphasising their contribution to reviving and preserving the instrument's cultural significance.

Introduction



Figure 1: MA 1985-1104. Eastern Cape, South Africa. *uhadi* Musical Bow. Made of Wood, Grass, String animal skin and Gourd. Xhosa. Museum Africa, Johannesburg.

The *uhadi* musical bow (Figure 1) is a historical instrument that is commonly found in museums. The above example is specially stored at Museum Africa in Johannesburg. The Museum is an art, culture, and heritage institution with a primary focus on preserving and conserving South Africa's cultural and historical heritage. However, I have discovered that the *uhadi* musical bow is mislabelled and decontextualised in the Museum Africa collection. First, in the photographic archival section, it is labelled as a "utensil or craft," and secondly, on the museum's archival online system, just as a "musical bow" (Seshoko 2017), making it difficult to differentiate from other similar-looking bows.

This contributes to the uncertainty of the musical instrument's origin, as instruments are usually classified as belonging to an ethnic group or in terms of ethnographic practices. It proved quite challenging to find information on the history of the *uhadi* bow. The instrument's mislabelling and imprecise classification provide no knowledge of the *uhadi*'s origin and maker, knowledge that I argue can contribute to the revival of the instrument. The motivation for seeking *uhadi* performers, particularly female performers, was that they were the most likely original makers (Plaatjies 2016). This would assist in acknowledging and giving agency to female performers as makers as well as promoting their possible role in reviving the instrument, thus restoring its significance and status. Current ethnographic practice in museums limits the provision of information about the actual makers of the instrument, which limits their recognition and access to business opportunities. This is an important curatorial issue: non-attribution to a maker deprives the viewer of knowledge and context. Michael Baxandall affirms the importance of attribution to a maker.

> The first agent, and clearly a very necessary one, is the maker of the artifact. If one thinks of the maker's relation to his culture in terms of the customary distinction between a participant's understanding and an observer's understanding, the maker is the classic participant. He understands his culture more immediately and spontaneously than outsiders (exhibitor and viewer included) can. (Karp and Lavine 1991)

In other words, the maker is sharing a creation that is unique to their culture, and knowing who they are gives one a better understanding of a different culture while creating a platform for the maker to be acknowledged for their creation.

My first proper encounter with musical bows was during the Inaugural International Bow Music Conference that occurred on the 24th to the 27th of February 2016 at the University of KwaZulu Natal. The conference featured numerous scholars and performers from different parts of the world, who demonstrated the significance and value of the instrument. As a young person I knew very little about the bow, and most of the attendees at the conference were older and male. Yet the performers were mainly female in accordance with traditional practice. This suggests that women are the gender with practical experience of making and playing the instrument. In addition, academics seemed to be regarded as more important than performers, which served to downplay recognition of women's achievement in respect of the musical bow. Most of the conference was devoted to the presentation of papers, and it was only on the last day of the conference that performers performed.

There is useful information to be gleaned from studies conducted by researchers such as Mandela (2005) and Dargie (2006) regarding how various musical bows are made to function, but no indication of the identity of the instruments' makers. An

early researcher claimed that "there are no specialist makers of the *uhadi* musical bow" (Kirby 1934). However, a more contemporary observation, based on cultural experience, is that "in most cases, Xhosa women have been creating the bowstring instrument for decades and passing the tradition from generation to generation as part of their culture. Perhaps, men would help when needed for activities such as bending and/or tightening the string" (Plaatjies 2016).

My subsequent research has revealed that women are unrecognised and unacknowledged as the makers, preservers, and restorers of the *uhadi* bow. The women featured in this study were chosen because of their variety of status but similarity of relationship and contribution to the *uhadi* bow. Each female artist helps to bridge the knowledge gap between our past and the present by teaching the youth an indigenous instrument. Notable examples are Madosini Maquina and Thandeka Mfinyongo.

The Origin of the *Uhadi* Musical Bow

Dargie (2016) cites Balfour's description of the *uhadi* as "a musical bow also known as a bowstring or string bow instrument [which] in most cases, is made from the Khoisan's hunting bow and a gourd." Dargie (2016) notes that "South African cultures share similar forms of instruments, however, the names and the ways they use the musical instrument make it unique of their cultures." For example, the Zulu bow, known as *umakhweyana*, is often mistakenly thought to be identical to the Xhosa *uhadi* bow. These two bows are made with the same material, the difference being that the gourd on *umakhweyana* is attached to the centre of the bow while on the *uhadi*, it is attached to the side.

The hole of the *umakhweyana* gourd is also smaller than that of the *uhadi*. Interestingly, Dargie (2006) also observed that the Xhosa word *uhadi* is similar to the Zulu *umhadi*, meaning a deep hole or pit. *Uhadi* also refers to the depth of the hollow calabash (i.e., the size of a woman's breast) that creates the sound for the instrument. These similarities may account for why the instruments are usually seen as identical. According to Levine (2005), "the design of all Xhosa bows developed from the San hunting bow, which consists of a curved stick and an attached string. The bow of the *uhadi* was formerly made from the *umbangandhlela* tree (a small indigenous tree with a yellowish flower) but nowadays is made from any type of wood." What makes the *uhadi* musical bow unique to the Xhosa people, according to Mandela (2005), is that the *umbangandhlela* tree native to various parts of the Eastern Cape only.

The calabash was measured according to the dimensions of a woman's breast to create comfort the instrument was handled. Also, "the stick [was] measured by the player in relation to her arm's length" (Mandela 2005). Mandela notably endorses Plaatjies's claim by using the feminine pronoun. Plaatjies (2016) notes that it was customary for women to perform domestic work such as fetching wood from the forest, from selected pieces of which they would craft the instrument.

How to Play the *Uhadi* Bow

There is musical knowledge[1] about the *uhadi* bow that identifies the instrument's uniqueness but does not contribute to the aims of this study. For that reason, I mention the parts of the instrument that contribute to understanding its creation. Mandela (2005) examined the terms for each part of the *uhadi* bow that – although defined in English – were hitherto not to be found in an isiXhosa dictionary. These are words she learnt from a female musical bow elder of the Xhosa culture. For instance, *usinga* refers to the string of the *uhadi* bow and was originally formed from a sinew (Mandela 2005). It was later made from the same wire that was used to make

the anklets that Xhosa women wore. The wire is reused: it is placed in fire first to facilitate bending. Mandela (2005) cites McLaren-Bennie's identification of the *uselwa* as the part of the musical bow that amplifies the sound through its hollow core. The gourd is used to hold the instrument together, with the strings being inserted into two small holes drilled when the gourd is dry and ready to be used. McLaren-Bennie also described the beater, *umcinga*, created from a turf stem that is left to dry for more than two days (Mandela 2005). The *uhadi* bow is constructed according to specific dimensions for each part:

> The stick should be about 20–22mm in diameter, and about 120–130 cm long. When the stick is bent, the string should stretch about 100–150 cm from end to end. The string should be 0.6 mm bronze wire or something similar. The calabash should be about 15–20 cm in diameter and hollowed out carefully. The opening is about 9–12 cm across. The calabash is firmly attached to the stick by the string pulled through two small holes in the base, and then wound around and around in between the calabash and stick until it can be held firmly. (Dargie 2006)

These are the standard measurements of the *uhadi*, though the maker will usually customise the instrument to suit their needs.

Dargie (2016) observes that in Xhosa culture, various songs are performed with the *uhadi* bow, often featuring important stories to share with future generations. The heritage of the musical bow thus assists in performing traditional ceremonies such as the welcoming of new borns, known as *imbeleko*, or traditional weddings known as *umcimbi wesintu*.

How to Position the *Uhadi* Bow

Dargie (2006) describes how the *uhadi* bow should be positioned for the player to operate it easily (see Fig.2). Holding it with the left hand, the instrument is kept firm with the last three fingers gripping the bow while the thumb and index finger wait to pinch the string on the opposite side. As shown in "A" in the figure below, a louder sound is created on note G, when the string is pinched; while when the string is stroked with the index finger only, as shown in "B," a lower sound is created on note F.

> The player can stop the string with the finger, or leave it open, producing two different notes, a tone apart. She strikes the string with the reed while the small opening of the calabash can be towards or away from her chest; in this way she varies the resonance of the sound by selecting different harmonics that are present in it. The *uhadi* player is responsible for producing the melody line, and in most cases sings the leading part of the song. She may also produce another rhythm by beating the feet. (African Musical Instruments 2009)

The instrument, therefore, allows the player to control the tones or melody produced, while she can also add a beat with her feet for an even more interesting sound. Interestingly, the above statement makes it clear that the musicians are female (Fig.3).

According to Koela (2016), the calabash (resonator) is attached to the bow because the instrument produces a soft sound when used as a stand-alone instrument. The calabash adds volume and resonance to the sound of the string, and these are further enhanced when the players' breasts are used to position the instrument. This also supports my argument that the *uhadi* is created by women. The different ways of playing the bow exploit the range of the sounds the instrument can produce.

Koela (2016) also elaborates on the various ways of changing the tone of the *uhadi*.

The musical bow's look has gradually changed over the years but the way it is played has not. Dargie (2016) points out that the player can change the positioning of the calabash on their body to create different sounds, both loud and soft. The calabash connects with the breasts in a way the player prefers and controls for various tones, while the fingers determine how the string functions. Clothing made of silk is preferable to wool or other materials when one is playing the instrument.

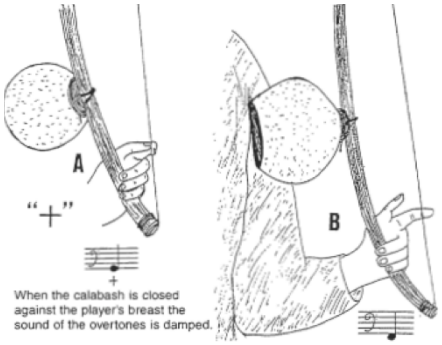


Figure 2: Playing position of the *uhadi* bow. Xhosa Music-Dargie: University of Fort Hare. 2006

Like any other musical instrument, the bow is played on musical scales which, according to Plaatjies (2016), are the same as Western scales.

> The scale which can be played by *uhadi* can be written as F, G, A, B, C, D – the tones F, A and C being produced by using the open-string chord, and G, B and D by using the held-string chord. The player must practice to get the feeling for the tones, which chord position to use, and just how far to open or close the calabash. Because the calabash produces chords, the notes of a melody are always accompanied by a background of soft harmony. So, with just one string the player produces melody and harmony. (Dargie 2006)

It is evident that the instrument is mostly played by women who, as skilled musicians, can control the overtones to create a unique and authentic sound. The "open or close[d]" positions mentioned by Dargie also support my claim about the instrument and the female body. The research presented clearly suggests the intimate relationship between females and the instrument.

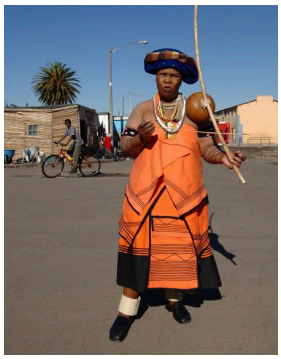


Figure 3: Madosini Mpahleni playing the *uhadi* Xhosa bow. Wood, string, grass, skin, and dried gourd. African Musical Instruments. 2009

Female *Uhadi* Musical Bow Players

The youth of today are exposed to modern music and popular culture and have little awareness of traditional musical instruments. I can confirm this from my personal perspective. When I visited the museum in search of the *uhadi* I did not know how to differentiate it from other musical bows, nor did I know much about its role and significance. This study aims to remedy this ignorance, especially by drawing attention to women – crafters and performers –who are reviving the instrument in important ways. These women were chosen because they represent different generations but all live in Johannesburg. Although largely unknown, they are all contributing to bridging the knowledge gap between generations. I believe that their marginal social status and limited access to education have robbed these women of their rightful recognition as the makers, performers and preservers of the *uhadi* bow. Here I introduce the non-Xhosa musician and instrument maker Esther Maumela, who has made an important impact. This is followed by interviews with the musician and poet Mthwakazi Lenga and the renowned traditionalist and musician Mantombi Matotiyana.

Profile of Female *Uhadi* Players

Esther Maumela, who is now 36 years old, is a Zulu born and bred in Daveyton Etwatwa. She is a musician and specialist in indigenous music. She started her musical career in 2008 as a student at the Sibikwa Arts Centre in Benoni. She successfully auditioned for the Centre's indigenous orchestra in 2009, when she was introduced

to African indigenous instruments as well as music theory. She has performed widely, lectured and presented workshops around South Africa (Maumela 2017).

Mthwakazi Lenga is a very spiritual person who grew up in a family that practises ritual and ancestral beliefs. Her family culture is important to her as a Xhosa who grew up in Mdantsane, East London. She was drawn to music at a very young age and it became something she pursued and grew to love. She emerged first as a singer with a beautiful contralto voice. She taught herself opera singing by listening to opera records. After joining the school choir, she entered school and regional competitions that she often won. She was eventually introduced to indigenous instruments, specifically bow instruments, when she enrolled at the University of Fort Hare. Her singing ability enabled her to accompany the notes she played with the instrument (Lenga 2017).

Lastly, the legendary *uhadi* musician Matombi Matotiyana was born years before apartheid. She is uncertain of her birth date because of never having had an identity document, but she believes that she was born in 1932. She can depict this through her performances, which she started to do at a very young age. She is originally from Tsolo in the Eastern Cape. The village recognises her as the all-time best Xhosa indigenous singer after the late Nomajova (Matotiyana 2017).

The Role of Female Musicians in the Crafting of the *Uhadi*

Maumela (2017) observes that it was compulsory to know how to play all the instruments featured in her orchestra, but that she "grew a special love for the *uhadi* bow." She adds that:

> the orchestra leaders would look at the one instrument that they see one plays better than the rest, then give us a responsibility to take care of it and also share with the rest of the members [what] they can do to improve playing it. So that's when I grew the love for this instrument. I then told myself that I am going to get one for myself. Even though I can make it, I decided to buy myself an *uhadi* from Cape Town, then I changed the string and replaced it with a string I bought from Sweden, and I love the special sound it makes.

Maumela emphasises her ability to make the instrument and that it was just a choice to buy the imported string, perhaps helping the instrument look and sound more modern.

Lenga (2017) stated that during her first year at university, most of the women students learned how to make their own African musical bows, but never had the opportunity to create the instrument in a more traditional setting by going into a village. They would be given the calabash, stick and other materials to make the instrument in class, including cutting and cleaning the calabash.

Matotiyana (2017) is well-versed in the making of musical bows, as this was the very first lesson she was taught by her mother. She specialised in the *umrhubhe* and *isitolotolo* because she learned how to make them first. Her nephew, who is also a musical bow player, asked her to learn some songs by well-renown *uhadi* player, Nofinishi Dywili, and in time she learnt all there is to know about the instrument. Interestingly, she recounted a time when her nephew was approached by an unknown international musician who expressed interest in having an elderly musical bow player perform in a show he hosted in Paris. Matotiyana is distinguished by her ability to create and play a variety of instruments and teach them to the youth. Today, Matotiyana produces and composes songs of her own with the use of the instrument and various vocal tones (2017). She is now regarded as a living legend, having travelled to various countries around the world and become the first woman to popularise the instrument.

Capacity Building of Emerging Artists

Maumela is currently teaching a group of girls at a Chinese temple in Bronkhorstspruit how to play this instrument, as well as about its history and how it is made (2017). She has also recently introduced it to schools around Daveyton. In her teaching, she emphasises that while it may be an indigenous instrument, it can also be used to play beautiful 21st-century music. Her initiative is helping to revive the instrument because her learners gain confidence from the knowledge that it is truly one with them, a part of their heritage. This creates a sense of belonging and helps them understand what it means to be proud of their roots.

Lenga (2017) is an 'art in education' teacher that uses her art to teach young people about their culture and traditions, while also showing them how to work with others in different contexts. She incorporates her personal journey and her drive and passion for this instrument into her teaching, where she prioritises reaching out to different kinds of people and teaching them more about the *uhadi*. Mostly focusing on children, she gets to work with various organisations. Her teaching includes workshops that cover the step-by-step process of making a musical bow, everything from collecting the material to making, positioning, and playing the instrument. Through a process called *Xho-cestra*, learners are taught Xhosa and other South African songs and given the opportunity to record and sell their music once they have mastered the instrument. Lenga's primary focus is on teaching young girls because she understands this historical aspect of the instrument.

Matotiyana (2017) makes it her priority to teach and educate the youth about the indigenous instruments she plays because she is aware that young mothers today live in urban areas and have little exposure to such instruments and music. She travels to various places in Cape Town to share her skills with different young groups. She will typically tell them stories about her childhood and how she came across these instruments. She carries a few around with her to teach the children how to use them.

Conclusion

My research reveals the important fact that women are not only players but the makers of the *uhadi* musical bow. They currently play a crucial role in preserving and reviving the instrument, conducting classes for nearby communities and teaching young people how to make and play the instrument. The amazing work these women do not only prevents the extinction of the indigenous musical bow but highlights its unique musical and cultural value, as a traditional artefact but also as an instrument that has a place and a role to play in contemporary society. For this reason, I recommend that South African museums develop their *uhadi* collections and knowledge about them for the general public. It is especially important that the craftspeople who create the instruments receive the credit due to them.

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Notes

1. *uhadi* (Xhosa), *ugubhu*/*ligubhu* (Zulu/Swati). Mostly played by women and girls normally in the evenings, although musical male youth occasionally take it up (Musical Bows in Southern Africa-Swazi Dlamini 2020)

"GHOSTLY IMPRINTS": REVISITING THE TRADITION OF THE DEATH MASK IN DIGITAL CLAY

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This paper explores the representation of the dead through a creative project that involves 3D digital sculptures inspired by forensic facial photographs of unclaimed deceased in government morgues as well as posthumous photographs of the author's mother-in-law. The project draws on the tradition of death masks and aims to create final portraits that commemorate the individuals and acknowledge the transcendental aspects of death masks. The author's work is situated within the discourse of art theory and history, rather than forensic art, and emphasises the artistic and conceptual nature of the sculptures. The project is associated with the International Committee of the Red Cross's Missing and Deceased Migrant Project and explores the humanitarian implications of migrant deaths in South Africa. The paper also delves into the history and evolution of death masks in Western culture, highlighting their significance as representations of true faces and their use in phrenology.

Introduction

While the subject of representing the dead is foundational to art history and current art research and practice, it is not free from controversy or ethical concerns. This paper engages with the theme by introducing a developing creative project that responds to forensic facial photographs of unclaimed and undocumented deceased from the Johannesburg Forensic Services, as well as posthumous photographs of my late mother-in-law.

The creative project comprises a series of 3D digital sculptures that draw on the genre of the death mask and the concept of the final portrait. While acknowledging the rich history of the death mask and its many forms, this paper will refer to those traditions that impacted on the creative project, in which the death mask is an impression of the face and is either in the form of a cast or a mould. The digital sculptures I have produced are not death masks, they are artworks that refer to the death mask tradition and the related notion of a ghostly imprint. The white digital clay resembles plaster and, as with the traditional death mask, veils reality and removes the abject horror one might experience in confronting the dead or the gruesome truth of a forensic photograph. The project aims, on the one hand, to produce a final portrait of an anonymous individual, to leave an indelible trace of their existence; and on the other hand, to acknowledge the commemorative and transcendental roles of the death mask. The project further explores the idea that the death mask potentially bears physical impressions of the pain or certainty of death. These themes will be discussed as they relate to the creative project and key examples within the genre and history of the death mask in the West.

The project has a formal association with the International Committee of the Red Cross's (ICRC) Missing and Deceased Migrant Project (ICRC 2021a, 2021c). The ICRC initiative is a humanitarian effort to identify the many unidentified and undocumented people who die in South Africa every day, most of whom are assumed to be irregular migrants. Permission to use forensic photographs of unclaimed and undocumented deceased from the Johannesburg Forensic Services was given by Wits Department of Forensic Medicine & Pathology. The source photographs were provided by and are credited to forensic photographer Tracey Reindorp.

My interest in the ICRC initiative and my decision to respond to the crisis in a creative project stemmed from an unsuccessful search by my own family for a relative who has been missing for decades. South Africa is one of the primary countries for migrants from Eastern and Southern Africa and beyond to enter – either as a destination or en route somewhere else. The journey to South Africa (SA) and within the country can be extremely dangerous and traumatic, often involving violations of fundamental human rights. Many migrants lose their lives, often disappearing without a trace. Not knowing what has happened to their loved ones profoundly affects the families who are left behind. This is a humanitarian tragedy on a large scale and one that receives far less publicity than the Central Mediterranean Route. In this regard, the Pretoria regional delegation of the ICRC is doing sterling work on several initiatives that aim to prevent migrants from disappearing, to restore and maintain contact with relatives and to increase the rate of identification of unclaimed, undocumented bodies in SA mortuaries.

As well as regular information updates and press releases on the ICRC websites, these initiatives include the publication of a comprehensive leaflet of vital information for Zimbabwean families of missing migrants, and the creation of a free App called Redsafe – a digital platform, managed by the ICRC, providing safe and secure services for people affected by conflict, migration, and other humanitarian crises (ICRC n.d.). In 2021 the ICRC launched *Trace the Face – Southern Africa*, an online tracing platform for missing relatives believed to be in southern Africa (Angola, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe) (ICRC 2021d, 2022). It

comprises a photo gallery of people looking for missing relatives and enables sought family members to contact the Red Cross and to get in touch with their families. In 2021, to mark the International Day of the Disappeared, the ICRC Regional Delegation in Southern Africa unveiled a memorial exhibition in commemoration of the countless missing migrants and their families (ICRC 2021b). These are just some of the ICRC initiatives, relating to their Missing Deceased Migrant programme.

While my source images are forensic, I would like to emphasise that my work does not belong to the genre of forensic art, nor does it straddle forensic science and art. I very deliberately located my research within the discourse of art theory and art history, with a specific focus on the genre and philosophy of the death mask. This provided the critical and theoretical matrix from which the practice emerged; it included specific sources and inspirations that illuminated my creative and conceptual processes. I believe this to be a valid approach to reporting on practice-based research. There are South African artists doing important work in the field of forensic art, notably Kathryn Smith, but my work is determinedly not within this tradition. Smith's projects use methodical processes to explore 3D forensic facial reconstruction for the purpose of identification, and clearly fall within the genres of forensic art and science. My works are, in contrast, based on an intuitive creative approach. They explore traditional sculptural modelling and draw on the artistic tradition of death masks and posthumous portraiture. My digital works are artworks first and foremost and do not lay claim to any forensic scientific value.

There is, however, some overlap between my project and Smith's work in terms of social engagement. For example, my association with the ICRC's Missing and Deceased Migrant project and Smith's with facial reconstructions for her Sutherland project, have a humanitarian correlation (Duvenage 2020). But Smith's project has more in common with the ICRC's Missing and Deceased Migrant project in they both draw on forensic processes and both serve the purpose of forensic identification. The forensic aspect of my work consists of the ICRC association, together with the fact that my source images are forensic photos and that death masks were used in the nineteenth century in forensic science. Other than this, my project does not draw profoundly on any forensic tradition or genre.

While the portrayal of the dead is inevitably contentious, artists have long been working in this field of representing one of the very few constants we can understand as being a condition of life. My awareness of the contemporary anathema to representing the dead aroused my curiosity as to how the genre of the final portrait and attitudes toward the representation of the dead had changed over time. The final portrait, pre- or post-mortem, was a common occurrence in the West up until the end of the nineteenth century, whether a death mask or a deathbed painting, drawing or photograph. The discomfort people experience today at the sight of a dead body, whether in real life or as an image, is of relatively recent provenance. Up to the mid-nineteenth century, death by public execution, disease, and illness was commonly experienced. Death was an everyday reality, witnessed first-hand in the home and the public sphere. Whether one regarded death medically, transcendentally, or existentially, it was something to be confronted. Lianne McTavish (2002), in "Picturing the Dead," a review of the Musée d'Orsay's *Last Portrait* exhibition in 2002, writes:

> In the not so distant past in the Western world, death was understood as a final, restful sleep. Dying was something that could be done well, even beautifully. Pointing to our current beliefs, the exhibition at the Musée d'Orsay demonstrated that death was not always approached as a medical event. In the past, death could be glorified and pondered, rather than recorded, measured, and explained. Instead it showed that death was once an important, mysterious and even remarkable event, one worth remembering. (1701)

While acknowledging the rich history of the death mask and its many forms, to contextualise my practice I will refer to those traditions where the mask is a true image or identikit of the face and takes the form of either a cast or a mould. We know that death masks date back to ancient Egypt and Africa, but these were mostly stylised and idealised renditions rather than true death masks cast from the face in plaster or wax. Interestingly, true death masks were absent from ancient Greece for, as Hans Belting states, "the Greeks were a people who hastily removed the gazes of their dead and cremated them as the face created a crisis of the gaze when it was disfigured by death" (2022, 188). Bartůněk notes that the ancient Romans created wax masks called *imagines maiorum*. None survive, but the high realism of Roman busts has been attributed to the wax casts, which Pliny describes in some detail, that were created by being pressed into plaster moulds of the face (2019, 34). These have been discussed as death masks, but some commentators (e.g., Flower 1999, 38) argue that these were more likely life masks, while allowing that some were probably made after death, especially if the death was unexpected.



Figure 1. Plaster death mask negative of an infant found in a Roman grave in Paris, Musée Carnavalet. (Photo courtesy of SAEML Parisienne de Photographie, in Carroll and Rempel 2011.)

The Evolution of the Meaning and Uses of the Death Mask in the West

More pertinent to this discussion are the non-elite plaster death masks originating in Rome in the second century AD (Madden 2017, 13). These are purported to be influenced by the *imagines maiorum* but appear to be true death masks (rather than life masks). The original form is a concave mould or impression of the face (Fig. 1). Surprisingly, little is known about these, which Crowely (2016, 68) puts down to the fact that the negative form is visually challenging and thus often overlooked. The concave form is visually elusive and difficult to photograph as, to the viewer, the static image will move between the convex and the concave, giving it an uncanny appearance. Also, it is more often the modern plaster casts taken from these concave postmortem impressions that are used to illustrate the genre. What is evident in the modern casts is that these are death masks, as they often reveal the potential cause of death and the distortions of the face caused by rictus soon after death.

Belting and others posit the idea of the death mask as the image of the 'true face,' uninhibited by the facial expressions of a 'counterfeit self' formed by socially learned codes of conduct. The true face, in this case, the bare face, becomes the frozen imprint of the plaster death mask: "For that reason, we honor the so-called death mask made of plaster or clay, not as an image of a corpse from which these may have been taken, but rather as an image of the 'true' face" (Belting 2022, 21). This may be true of those death masks, unchanged by human hand, and unmarked by injury, rictus or signs of illness or pain. Often, however, the death mask shows signs of death that remove the face from the one we knew in life. Moreover, sometimes much effort goes into counteracting the effects of the rictus in the mortuary which so quickly distorts the face after death, before taking a cast.

Belting's view is undermined by the comments of the Irish novelist Maria Edgewood, on visiting Cambridge in 1813 and seeing three casts take after death. She wrote: "We cannot help looking at casts taken after death with curiosity and interest and yet it is not probable that they should mark the real, natural, or habitual character of the person; they often can only mark the degree of bodily pain or ease felt in the moments of death. I think these casts made me pause to reflect more than anything I saw this day" (qtd. in Madden 2017, 23). The differences between the life mask and the death are apparent, as can be seen when one contrasts the life mask of William Blake (Fig. 2 A) with that of a Roman non-elite plaster mask (Fig. 2 B). In the latter, the eyes and cheeks are sunken, unlike Blake's mask. The probable cause of death was a violent blow to the nose, as evident in the nasal distortion.

Reserved for royal funerary rites during the Middle Ages, the practice of making death masks became more widespread during the Renaissance, particularly in Quattrocento Florence. Vasari also mentions the important influence of death masks on painting and sculpture. In contrast to the classical idealism of the time, the distinctive distortions of death masks were incorporated into the marble and bronze effigies and portrait paintings and busts of famed humanists and gifted intellectuals of the era (Vasari 2008). Often the death mask cast was directly incorporated into the sculpture as with Donatello's, *Bust of Niccolo da Uzzano*, a famed Italian politician (Fig. 3). Schuyler (1986, 1) notes: "Rigor mortis, which alters the face of the deceased, has left its mark here: the muscles have lost their tone because there is no longer any nerve stimulus; the bone structure has become more apparent; the temples and cheeks have fallen in; the cheekbones and jawbones strongly protrude; the eyes have sunk deeply into the orbits." Schuyler suggests that little refinements were made to such portraits (that were displayed in public and in the home) because "they were considered aesthetically pleasing and were an answer to a psychological need" (1).

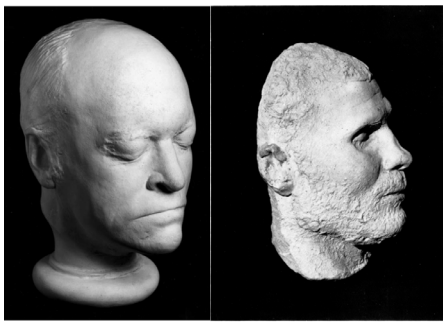


Figure 2. (A) 1809 Life Mask of William Blake, cast by James Deville 1923, National Portrait Gallery, London; (B) Cast made from a mould of a man found in El-Jem. Tunisia (Slim 1976)

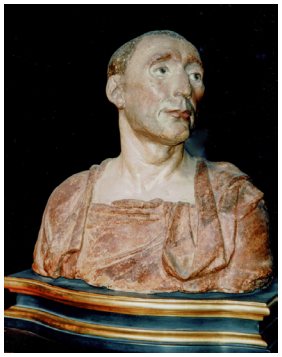


Figure 3. Donatello, *Bust of Niccolo da Uzzano*, 1430s, polychromed terracotta, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence. Wikimedia Commons, (CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication)

The proliferation of death masks from the late-eighteenth century well into the nineteenth century was partly due to the popularisation of the pseudo-science of Phrenology. Phrenology claimed that organs in the brain determined particular mental faculties and traits, and that these could be measured by the shape and formation of the skull. Phrenologists collected death masks mostly of famous people and executed criminals – with the aim of discovering "what makes men great" and "what makes men criminals" (Hylland 2018, 174). Hylland suggests that aside from the phrenological function, a new attitude towards the masks developed in the final part of the eighteenth century in that "the death mask was bestowed with a new, representative function, in the sense that the masks could represent the character, soul and spirit of the deceased person. In that sense, the personality of the person had an imprint, or copy, in the mask" (2018, 174). The cast's indexical relationship to the original changes – it is no longer an effigy or memorial of the deceased, but an independent object imbued with 'physiognomic truth.' This change in attitude has been dated specifically to the death and death mask of the German writer Gotthold Ephraim Lessing in 1781. While made as a commemorative memento by his friends, it is seen to be the first example of a "death mask taken purely in reverence" (Grimes 1975, 510). Similarly, Théodore Géricault's emaciated death mask (Fig. 4) become an icon of the Romantic movement and an indispensable item in many young artists' studios for decades after his death. Eitner (1983) posits that his death mask inspired the artistic imagination and Romantic spirit more profoundly than his paintings.

This cult of the death mask is best epitomised in the famous death mask from the late 1880s of the *Unknown Woman of the Seine* (Fig. 5) which has caught the imagination of artists, writers, and poets for over a century. Some commentators believe this to be a hoax, but the story goes that the pathologist was so struck by her beauty and serene expression – which showed no signs of distress, although her death was an assumed suicide – that he made a death mask. As a popular cultural, secular, and intellectual phenomenon – the mask was endlessly reproduced up until the 1930s – it became a technically reproducible copy without an original. With the *Unknown Woman of the Seine*, the death mask became a totemic object that encouraged veneration of the timeless, authentic face.

Belting talks of a nostalgia for the nineteenth-century notion of the timeless face after World War I. He suggests that the idea of the individual had been painfully destroyed by the war, with its numerous anonymous dead. The search for a lost ideal became popular in the form of devotional picture books of famous death masks of intellectual greats. One such example is *Das Ewige Antlitz* (*The Eternal*

Countenance; or The Undying Face) by Ernst Benkard. Belting describes Benkard's intention to present a collective iconic last image of man where the viewer recognises "the face of man finally released from the grimace of the day." The purpose of these collections was to enable people to feel that "they could contemplate this ideal in the death masks of poets and philosophers unimpeded by fashions and trends. It was a paradoxical exercise to wish to rescue a timeless face from the disasters of the age" (Belting 2022, 294).

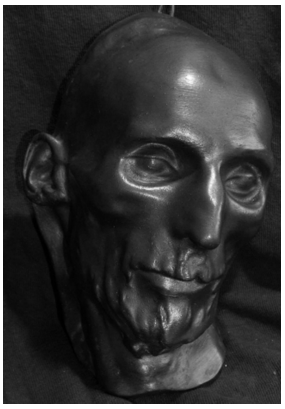


Figure 4. Death mask of Théodore Géricault, copy. Wikimedia Commons, (CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication)



Figure 5. *L'inconnue de la Seine (The Unknown Woman of the Seine)*, circa 1900, plaster cast copy, Wikimedia Commons, (CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication)

Working in Digital Clay: A Brief Overview of the Modelling Approach Used to Create the Death Masks for the Creative Project

The digital sculptures I am discussing consist of three portraits of unclaimed and undocumented deceased from the JPS, entitled *Unknown 1, 2 and 3* (Fig. 10) and a final portrait of my late mother-in-law, entitled *In Memory, Mother-in-Law* (Fig. 11).[1] These sculptures were created in a digital modelling program called Z-Brush. While mastering the 3D platform is a steep learning curve, the software provides a space for sculpting in an intuitive manner by hand and in a way that is not unlike manipulating traditional clay, and using traditional techniques like modelling and carving.

Figure 6 shows the Z-Brush interface. This is a dynamic and multi-layered software program that enables all manner of 3D building processes – from systematic geometric and architectural form building to intuitive modelling processes that emulate traditional clay modelling. The tools that I use barely touch the surface of what the software offers but afford me a medium for creating sculptures. These tools simulate clay modelling in that one can build up, take away, distort, incise and manipulate the digital clay just as one might a traditional piece of clay. Figure 7 shows how one can take a basic uniform sphere and approach it as one would a lump of clay. This was the method I used.

As with traditional modelling, I began by obtaining an accurate essential form and then slowly added more detail as the work progressed. Figure 8 shows an example of this progression and my working method. I start with a material called MatCap Red Wax. This is similar to terracotta clay in colour and is the easiest hue to model with as it picks up shadows, textures, tones and details most effectively. I render the forms out using a white material called SkinShade4 (see Figure 7). This is the closest in tone to plaster.

One difference between digital and traditional clay is that one needs to understand that while digital clay may look and behave like clay it is made up of an underlying geometric topology. This is the term used for the patterns of polygons (a plane made up of straight edges and vertices) that form various geometric shapes to make up a 3D mesh. It is essential to understand how to maintain a smooth underlying topology – especially if one plans to 3D print the model. An uneven underlying topology may not be visible on the surface of the model viewed on the digital platform but will cause endless problems with 3D printing, resulting in distortions and holes. Similar problems will occur if a model is imported into a 3D animation program and rigged to prepare for movement. Generally, one starts off with a very simple topology with as few polygons as possible when establishing a basic shape and then progresses to a more complex topology with a higher polygon count as the form gets more detailed. The demarcated area in Figure 8 shows an uneven topology, something one needs to avoid as best one can.

I moved between three modes of modelling in Z-Brush – *Sculptris Pro*, *Dynamesh* and *Z Remesher*. These three modes allow one to sculpt intuitively without losing the underlying smooth geometry or topology and are very useful for creating detailed organic forms. If a polygon count gets too high, the program can crash or become too slow to work efficiently. In this case, *Dynamesh* and *Sculptris Pro* can assist

in constructing detailed forms while at the same retaining a smooth geometry. Figure 9 shows these various modes in practice. A shows a simple version of the form using the *Dynamesh* mode, and C shows a detailed version of the form in *Sculptris Pro* mode. In this mode, the finer details have a more complex topology and the broader forms a simpler topology, but the topology is still smooth. B shows *Z Remesher* mode where the topology is recalculated to produce an all-over lower polycount mesh. This is to be used only when necessary, and specifically when preparing models for 3D printing – as it can cause the form to lose sculptural detail. Once the form is complete it gets rendered out of the program to adjust various lighting, tonal and atmospheric attributes. These attributes can be composited in layers in a program such as Photoshop to give the image its final finish.

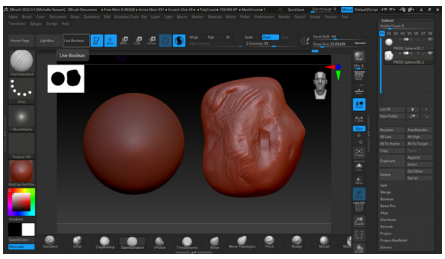


Figure 6. Screenshot, Z-Brush interface showing various clay modelling approaches (Stewart 2023)

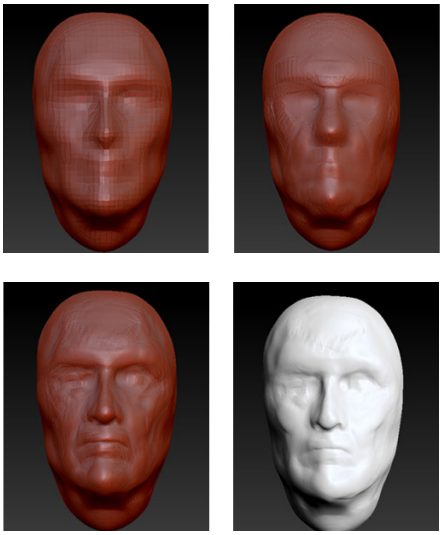


Figure 7. Screenshot, Z-Brush, an illustration of the modelling process, the MatCap Red Wax and SkniShade4 material (Stewart 2023)

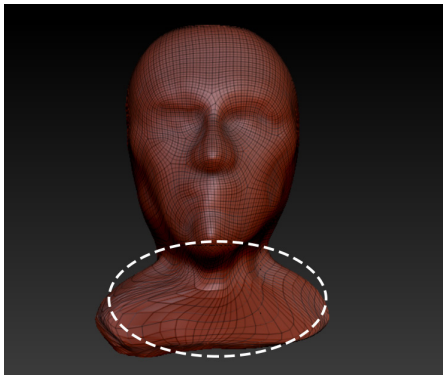


Figure 8. Screenshot, Z-Brush, an illustration of an uneven topology (Stewart 2023)

The Obligation to the Corpse and the Trace

With the undocumented deceased, such images were and remain a mystery. One can only speculate about the character and circumstance of the subject when contemplating the photographs and making the sculptures. The only truth, aside from the fact that that they are unknown and unclaimed is that – as Maria Edgewood noted in 1813 after seeing the death masks in the Cambridge collection – in most cases, they bear marks of the pain and certainty of death. In meticulously detailing each face, one can record each wound, and in some cases fresh scars and ghosts of scars of previous injuries, distortions caused by injury, rictus, and decay (see Figure 10).[2] Marcia Pointon describes the creation of the death mask "as part of a tactical and artistic process whose objective is to distance the cast face from the actual face, to rinse it clean of the touch of the corpse and therefore of its association with decaying matter" (2014, 172–73). The digital sculptures draw on this aesthetic to serve a similar purpose. This is not an attempt to deny the tragic reality of the deceased but to remove the created image from the dejected status of the corpse and its evocation of abjection within the viewer. The white digital clay has a distancing effect that enables one to process and present the images without invoking the gruesome reality of a forensic photograph. This is not to say that they will not be disturbing or troubling to some viewers. The point is not to gloss over the tragedy but to present it in a way that is visually accessible and gives the viewer pause for reflection. The images have been fashioned with an acute awareness that creating a death mask or responding to the tradition of the death mask in this way brings into tension the duty to the corpse, and the desire to hold onto a tangible memory or a visible trace. Pointon notes that "[t]he stresses around making imprints of the face of a dead person and the tensions between obligation and art are clearly documented in the historical accounts of death masks, suggesting that, while they share with other kinds of imprints a particular resonance, their making occasions difficult responses, and, once produced, they become extreme and highly affective objects" (178–79).

Another aim, once it became more apparent during the process, was to make visual where possible the pain of death.

Creating the portrait of my mother-in-law (Fig. 11) was different from creating the anonymous portraits, as I was sculpting the face of someone I knew intimately. I had taken the posthumous photographs; she was aware of my project and had

consented to a posthumous portrait of some kind before she died. I approached this piece as a familial commemorative work in the traditions of the death masks I had been studying. The COVID pandemic has brought the reality of death much closer to home, with more people – especially the aged – dying at home, as was the case with my mother-in-law. In 'normal' circumstances, this would happen in hospital, at a distance, behind the doors of intensive care units. In contemplating this work, and its highly personal nature, specific artworks come to mind. The first is Ron Mueck's hyperreal 40-inch sculpture of the corpse of his father. It is meticulously detailed, and despite its small size appears real. However, it is clearly lifeless, coolly positioned, as though on a mortuary table. Chris Raine observes, "this body is unmistakably dead. It is laid out – the opposite of foetal. We are not in the presence of sleep. The eyes have it – significantly pink, fatally, infinitesimally sunken. And the helpless hands have irretrievably lost it" (2006, n.p.). Mueck notes that he wasn't close to his father – but comments, "through the process of making the work I found myself thinking about him, caring" (Raine 2006, n.p.). Mueck was not present at the death of his father and worked from photographs and his imagination. Raine notes, however, that the mouth is wrong, pointing out that with most deaths the mouth distorts at an awkwardly sunken angle, an effect of the rictus. Usually, this is rectified in the mortuary and thus one would have to be at the bedside to know this. Nonetheless, this takes nothing away from the power of this last portrait. Lucien Freud captures this posture of the mouth after death in his graphite sketch (1989) of his mother on the day she died, as does Daphne Todd's *Last Portrait of Mother* (2010). The distorted angle of the mouth after death is a hard thing to confront as one recognises it immediately as an effect of rictus, a physical final sign that the person is gone. *In Memory – Dead Mother-in-Law* relies upon a series of images taken just before the subject passed away and then soon after her death. As opposed to the portraits of the unknown deceased, this piece emerged very specifically as a memory of someone. While she died relatively peacefully, it was after a long and debilitating illness and in this sense, the image also marks the face of a person who in Benkard's words is "freed at last from the passing grimace" (1929, 40).

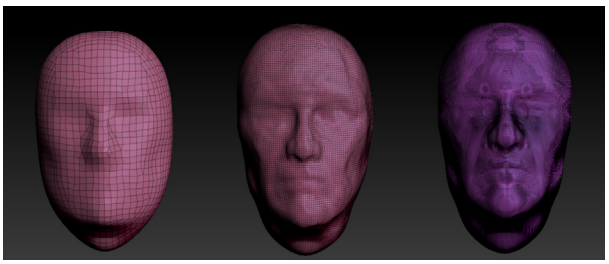


Figure 9. Screenshot, Z-Brush, an illustration of geometry as it appears in the *Dynamesh* (A) *ZRemesher* (B) and *Sculptris Pro* (C) modes (Stewart 2023)

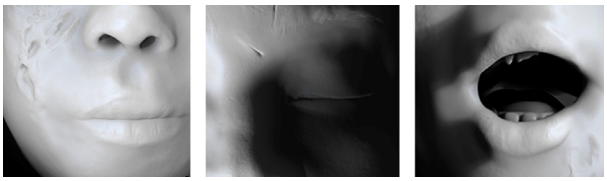


Figure 10. Cropped versions of the original portraits of unclaimed deceased (Stewart 2023)



Figure 11. Cropped version of the original portrait, *In Memory – Dead Mother-in-Law* (Stewart 2023)

In closing, the works described above constitute a developing series and are part of a broader project that includes animated paint-on-glass posthumous portraits of unclaimed deceased and of my mother-in-law. As a work in progress, it has so far spanned nearly two years. Any exhibition or presentation of the work will include an acknowledgement of the formal association with the ICRC's Missing and Deceased Migrant project and an acknowledgement of the JFS. Ethical issues may arise around the showing and exhibition of these works, but they can only be dealt with once I have completed the project. I am thinking deeply about these issues as I approach each step and in conversation with the ICRC. At this early stage of the project I have covered the important ethical issues – in obtaining the formal endorsement of the ICRC, in following the ethical requirements set out by the JFS, and in going through the thorough ethical clearance procedure required by the institution I am affiliated with, the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). Certain artistic, ethical, philosophical and personal issues may require more profound engagement when it comes to formal presentation of the artworks and must therefore await completion of the project.

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Illustrations

Figure 1. Plaster death mask negative of an infant found in a Roman grave in Paris, Musée Carnavalet. (Photo, courtesy of SAEML Parisienne de Photographie), in *Living Through the Dead. Burial and Commemoration in the Classical World*, edited by by M. Carroll and J. Rempel. Plate 4.

Figure 2. (A) 1809 Life Mask of William Blake, 1823. cast by James Deville, London, National Portrait Gallery (©National Portrait Gallery), https://npgimages.com/cdn/npg/thumbs//3/3/a4ef8fee0efc6dccee6ef99c2171cbf3;

(B) Cast made from a mould of a man found in El-Jem, Tunisia (Photo provided by J. Pèrez). In Hédi Slim, "Masques mortuaires d'El-Jem." Plate 3.

Figure 3. Donatello, *Bust of Niccolo da Uzzano*, 1430s, Polychromed terracotta, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence, Italy, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Donatello,_Uzzano,_Bargello.jpeg, (CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication)

Figure 4. Death mask of Théodore Géricault, copy, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gericaultdeathmask.jpg, (CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication)

Figure 5. *L'inconnue de la Seine (The Unknown Woman of the Seine)*, circa 1900, plaster cast copy, File:L'inconnue de la Seine (masque mortuaire).jpg – Wikimedia Commons, (CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication)

Figure 6. Screenshot, Z-Brush interface showing various clay modelling approaches, (Stewart, M. 2023).

Figure 7. Screenshot, Z-Brush, an illustration of the modelling process, the MatCap Red Wax and SkniShade4 material, (Stewart, M. 2023).

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Figure 10. Cropped Versions of the original portraits of unclaimed deceased, (Stewart, M. 2023).

Figure 11. Cropped Version of the original portrait, Mother-in-law (Stewart, M. 2023).

Notes

1. I have opted to show segments of the death mask portraits of unclaimed deceased individuals, as I would prefer these not to be shown as full portraits online. The reader can get a more complete sense of the visual approach to these images from the work, *In Memory, Mother-in-Law*, which is shown in full.
2. These images are cropped versions of the original full portraits.

PRIORITY MAIL PROCESS LAB: AN EXPERIMENT IN MIGRANT DRAMATURGY

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This paper reflects on the dramaturgy of the Priority Mail Process Lab, a month-long virtual residency program called into existence during the Covid-19 pandemic. The lab aimed to facilitate an exchange of objects, ideas, and insights between Francophone and Anglophone African artists. The paper explores the artistic research practice behind the lab, focusing on the themes of migration, mobility, and the role of African women. It discusses the curatorial intentions of prioritizing process over production, the importance of care, and the political implications of rest and emancipation. The paper also delves into the concept of migrant dramaturgy and the experiences of Black migrant cultural production.

Introduction

In 2019, I was invited by the Africa 2020 Season Festival in France to participate in the curation of a programme of events that featured artists of different disciplines from across Africa. In response to this invitation, I, along with collaborator, Lindiwe Matshikiza, envisioned a month-long virtual residency programme which came to be called the Priority Mail Process Lab. This Lab was designed to enable a reflective, playful, and stimulating exchange of objects, ideas and insights between seven Francophone and Anglophone artists whose biographies and practices flow through the African continent. The Priority Mail Process Lab sought to facilitate a sharing of practice and place between artists who would not have been able to share physical space due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and for some of whom, the possibility of travel depended on the currency of their passports. The Lab's thematic orientation cohered around a long-standing artistic research interest of mine: the migration and mobility of African women. I have found that my artistic practice as a theatre maker has been a productive place to reflect on, work through and generate various meanings and manifestations of migration, mobility and movement. It has been and continues to be a place to rehearse various formations of community, a place for the design of processes that bring people together to bring something new into being. I have found that the processual nature of theatre and performance methods tends to be undervalued, when in fact it is on the floor, as it were, where the art of "how we meet and why it matters" (Parker 2018) is most rigorously practised.

This paper aims to reflect on the dramaturgy of the Priority Mail Process Lab as an example of artistic research practice. The exploration of theatre-making and dramaturgy as process of design and an art of gathering continues to ground my own practice as I work towards an articulation of what might be called a *migrant dramaturgy*. This ongoing project is based on a broad understanding of dramaturgy as "a particular process of work that is common to all artistic production (whether 'experimental', 'traditional', 'new', or 'old'), and that sheds light upon the ways in which encounters, work, and the creation inside (and possibly also outside) the artistic frame happen" (Georgelou et al. 2017, 15). The project was not led from the outset by an explicit research question, but was guided by my creative research interests in how the intersections of race, gender and migration can critique present realities and imagine possible futures. This is an example of artistic research in which I attempt to extract the ideas and concepts *from* the work after the fact, rather than producing the concepts and ideas *in* the work as it is being made. The two processes are not necessarily distinct from each other, in the sense that my pre-existing interests generate particular creative tendencies that cohere around migration, race and gender and collaborative and interdisciplinary practice. As Georgelou et al. maintain,

> Even when one speaks of the way that practice and theory complement each other, this implies a pre-existing separation and subsequent coming together of the two; instead, the kind of work that we identify as dramaturgical takes place in thinking, doing, making, and writing, in a way that does not privilege either theoretical thinking or performance making as the site of dramaturgical practice, but rather exceeds and makes irrelevant such distinctions. (2017, 20)

This migrant dramaturgical practice that I am in search of refuses state-sponsored images of the migrant as homeless, desperate and nostalgic. Instead, while cognisant of the material realities of various migrant lives, I wish to leverage the emancipatory possibilities available when the concept of the migrant is connected to potential, disruption and boundlessness. It is from this perspective that the paper presents the Priority Mail Process Lab as a site of migrant dramaturgical practice.

Curatorial Intentions

Priority Mail was not focused on making things. In our curatorial intentions, Matshikiza and I were firm in our desire to not push the production of cultural goods. Precisely at the time when digital content was being demanded from artists in live performance spaces to validate their artistic existence, when the Covid-19 pandemic seemed to have decimated our already fragile industry, we wanted to focus on process. In the spirit of the correspondence and mail art movements (*Ray Johnson Estate*, n. d.), our intention was to (re)invest in experimental and experiential artistic encounters and connections that are slow, iterative, collaborative, and that occur across and between borders, disciplines and languages. As a particular configuration of artistic research, this creates a framework for a kind of dramaturgical practice. In the Priority Mail project, this framework also included a conscious need to make space for care amid the reigning carelessness of the pandemic, especially for those who are on the front line of providing care to others, doing work which has long been devalued. As members of the Care Collective attest,

> After all, the archetypal neoliberal subject is the entrepreneurial individual whose only relationship to other people is competitive self-enhancement. And the dominant model of social organisation that has emerged is one of competition rather than co-operation. Neoliberalism, in other words, has neither an effective practice of, nor vocabulary for, care. (Chatzidakis et al. 2020, 4)

In seeking to build a practice and vocabulary of care we were driven not necessarily by a notion of care as "the work people do when directly looking after the physical and emotional needs of others – critical and urgent as this dimension of care remains," but "'Care' as a social capacity … actively involving the nurturing of all that is necessary for the welfare and flourishing of life" (Chatzidakis et al. 2020, 5). The foregrounding of care in the curation of this virtual residency, involving analogue exchange across geographic borders, facilitated what might be called a diasporic creative practice of care. In conjunction with the slow, iterative, collaborative, experimental, experiential and non-product orientation of Priority Mail, the project starts to instantiate a way of working that has political implications. In her recent book, *Rest Is Resistance: A Manifesto* (2022), theologian and founder of the Nap Ministry,[1] Tricia Hersey, makes a compelling argument for rest as an act of self-preservation and of refusal to submit one's body to labour in the service of capitalism. She describes Rest as Resistance as a "political movement rooted in care and justice" (Hersey 2022, 8) and frames rest as a practice of emancipation from legacies of exhaustion, as a subversive disruption to white supremacy, and as a radical care practice that resists the machine-level pace of grind culture[2] (Hersey, 2022). By insisting on a process-based project, with no specific outcome, Priority Mail was intuitively centring one of the formative ideas of the Rest is Resistance Movement, namely that "our worth is not connected to how much we produce" (Hersey 2022, 11). This idea resonates not only with working artists but also with (black) women whose physical and emotional labour is often unacknowledged at worst and poorly compensated at best. As noted simply by Hersey, "The world is so addicted to the constant labour of Black women" (2022, 167) and "[t]here is no vision or model of a Black woman to be free from the exploitation of her emotional, physical, and spiritual labour" (2022, 168). In her book, rest is also framed as an opportunity for "invention, imagination and restoration" (Hersey 2022, 161), as a reclaiming of what Hersey calls *DreamSpace*, and as a practice that goes beyond literally napping to include any number of ways one might craft moments of rest and care into one's life, which allow one to simply be, to daydream, to unplug, to be quiet and to slow down, alone and in community. I would argue with Hersey, who is also a performance artist, that these are liberatory ideas in the context of women artists in the African diasporas.

Avtah Brah's conception of diaspora as "an interpretive frame for analysing the economic, political and cultural modalities of historically specific forms of migrancy" (1996, 15), is useful here. In the context of the Priority Mail project, Brent Hayes Edwards also has a useful general formulation of diaspora in relation to Africa, as "a term … to express the links and commonalities among groups of African descent throughout the world" (2001, 45). An expanded notion of African diaspora is deployed here, diaspora being an inclusive term referring both to communities of particular African nationalities living in African countries besides those of their birth and to the wider diaspora resulting from those communities being dispersed from Africa into the rest of the world.

The artists participating in Priority Mail, who included Matshikiza and myself, were based in Accra, Kinshasa, Paris, Berlin, Johannesburg, Cape Town and Amsterdam, and our individual biographies troubled easy notions of origin, belonging, family and home. During the virtual residency, many of us also cautiously travelled elsewhere for work or family, or both. The residency was formed around the following invitation: for each artist to send a package of creative prompts that speak to their place and their practice to someone else in the group; for these packages to come together within the flow of the artist's daily life, the constituent items to be gathered, assembled, foraged, found, picked, sampled or made, rather than purchased. The residency was in this way based upon a gentle, spacious, process-based enquiry into each other's migrant lives. Along with the making, sending and receiving of packages, we agreed to a loosely facilitated weekly online gathering and to keep a shared residency diary and process archive in the form of a WhatsApp group. This would enable us to remain in tangential conversion through the sharing of texts, images, audio and video notes, including communally tracking the parcels that may or may not have experienced smooth passage to their intended destinations. The residual material from the package exchanges, edited selections of our virtual meetings, and selections of the residency diary were carefully selected, edited and documented by multi-disciplinary artist Nicola Pilkington on a dedicated page on the Africa 2020 Season magazine website.[3]

Black Migrant Cultural Production

At the time of the residency in 2020, the global moment had thrown into sharp relief issues of physical distance, social inequality, and the complexities of product- and content-driven economies, which afforded us the opportunity to think about migration from the perspective of movement and not stasis. The Lab aimed to leverage the moment as an opportunity for artists in Francophone and Anglophone Africa to be more easily connected, while critically engaging with the historical reasons why they typically were not. The undercurrent guiding our discussions during our weekly gatherings was our personal experience of migration as women with complex relationships to the African continent. According to Emma Cox,

> a migrant can be a person who leaves one home and makes another, or one with multiple homes, or none, or a person who eschews geographical fixity altogether. Migrants can be individuals, families or political communities. They may move by choice or by compulsion. They may be made welcome or shunned. And each of these contingencies can bleed into another. (2014, 7)

A foundational premise of the migrant dramaturgy that Priority Mail was attempting to put into practice is that the societal vantage point of those who might be identified as, and who might self-identify as diasporans in the form of migrants, nomads, travellers, outcasts, exiles and outsiders is a useful one for being able to see and describe with "detail, texture and meaning … themes that are both specific to their diasporic

experience and common to the human condition" (Abebe 2019, 56). This vantage point feeds into the notion of what might be called diasporic artistic practice, meaning any form of intentional creative expression through various mediums that facilitates the exploration and expression of diasporic identifications without the need to make discoveries or conclusions (Abebe 2019).

The residency as a whole explored how the processes of sending and receiving, sharing and gifting of the physical artistic prompts stand in for the relocation and dislocation of people and objects at the heart of migratory inquiry. My own approach to migratory inquiry is largely through a deployment of Vijay Prashad's description of Shailja Patel's autobiographical performance poem titled *Migritude* (2010) as "a philosophical meditation on what it means to live within the concept of Migrant" (Prashad 2010, iv). In her poem, Patel foregrounds racialised and gendered intersections of migrant life and inaugurates an anticolonial, philosophical meditation on contemporary experiences of African migration.

Patel's *Migritude* (2010) is my entry point into the genre of black migrant cultural production. I recall reading it in one sitting, strongly identifying with this poetic playtext that wove personal memory and family history together with political history and – similar to my own migrant biography – traversed Africa, North America and Europe. I was struck by the visceral, activist poetic voice that was at once rage-filled, compassionate, sorrowful, ironic, defiant, lyrical and celebratory. It was the first creative work that I had come across that hit so many nuanced emotional registers in response to moving through the world as an African woman migrant. It was a pivotal moment for me of feeling located and recognised and it reminded me that my negotiations of local/foreigner, citizen/migrant, national/alien were not mine alone. In her work, Patel confronts us directly, insisting upon our disappointment if not outright horror at the fact that we continue to be haunted by the ghosts of empire, the costs of which are borne daily as embodied experiences. *Migritude* engages with what it means to be African as a paradox of encounters characterised by threat, abuse, defensiveness, misunderstanding and fear, on the one hand, and collaboration, expansion, alliance and synergy on the other. The sharing of how these paradoxical encounters manifested individually for the Priority Mail artists was among the most resonant experiences of the residency.

Migrancy, as a particular category of diasporic subjectivity, brings borders into focus, and the fluid borders of the real and the imaginary are the organic territory of theatre and performance. Movement across, through and within this field of struggle, described variably as a crossing, an escape or a negotiation (Kobialka 1999), marks not only the thematic interests of Priority Mail, but also begins to provide a vocabulary for a migrant dramaturgical practice in "a discipline in which the materiality of borders and border crossings is a physical, immanent threshold" (Kobialka 1999, 4). While the Priority Mail Process Lab could not *per se* be described as a piece of theatre or performance, I would argue that the methods of theatre and performance in creating an intentional gathering of people in artistic collaboration were very much at play in this project.

Akona Nkenkana echoes Maria Lugones (2008) in her call "to enact critique of racialized, colonial and capitalist heterosexualist gender oppression as a lived transformation of the social" (Nkenkana 2015, 41). A migrant dramaturgy indeed seeks to enact such a critique from the point of view of African migrant women. Leveraging this intersectional perspective towards a "transformation of the social" means taking an active interest in challenging or at least complicating the discourse about African migration that is dominated by states and civil society, a narrative in which migrants have figured as an inconvenience if not a threat, but a problem, nevertheless, to be dealt with in various strategic ways. The larger political project of a migrant dramaturgy is to engage in this transformation of the social and is guided by an understanding of performance-making as a socially engaged public practice.

Our desire was to create thoughtful, artistic – and therefore social – engagement at an intimate level, between a handful of people who were largely unknown to each other who could co-create a shared space for exploration and unfolding. Through the exchange of stories, ideas and objects we hoped to facilitate a care-full, curious, playful and provocative environment in which the artists could engage with complex and contentious experiences of migration as a contribution to black migrant cultural production.

A migrant dramaturgy seeks to use some of the aesthetic features of contemporary black, migrant cultural production. As noted by Vanita Reddy (2020), these include defining Africa by movement, linking the concept of migrant with the concept of colonial history and the diasporic refusal of return. It includes Veejay Prashad's (2010) and Thomas Nail's (2015) contentions that the migrant is central to a project of social re-imagining, as well as Mark Fleishman's (2015) notion of a dramaturgy of displacement, where movement and migration form a core part of both the form and content of artistic work.

The field of migration studies tends to be dominated by numerical categories and faceless mapping of the movements of people, often for the purpose of attempting to assert some measure of control. The cultures of surveillance, suspicion and profiling that inform most immigration discourse are challenged by the personal and inter-subjective encounters characteristic of projects such as Priority Mail. Such projects counter the way in which African migration has been reported in the media since the early 1990s, where stories of undifferentiated mass movement and group identity are favoured over individual thoughts, sentiments and experiences (Canut and Sow 2014). Assisted by immigration policies, particular kinds of press coverage and the humanitarian/development industry, associations of hardship and trauma predominate when African migrants are represented, spoken for and about. We generally feature as disturbances in the lives of the settled, local citizens. It is in providing a platform for some of these very *individual thoughts, sentiments and experiences* that Priority Mail sought to make an intervention in the discourse. A secondary intervention engages with the male bias in migration studies, which by and large understand female migrants as accompanying their male migrant spouses. The work to counteract this bias has led to an increased focus on the interactions of gender and mobility and what has been termed the "feminisation of migration" by South African scholar Amanda Gouws (Gouws, 2010).

Priority Mail Reflections

The Priority Mail Process Lab was the first in what we hope will be a recurring correspondence-based, virtual, group residency, with a carefully selected group of artists situated in various parts of Africa and the diaspora. Initially constructed in response to the restrictions accompanying the Covid-19 pandemic and its complex impact on artists in these geographic locations, the process of designing and facilitating the residency incorporated several curatorial features that lend themselves towards a migrant dramaturgical framework. In retrospect, my co-curator and I knew that we wanted to invite artists who had a focus on process within their general practice; who we felt would be open to a group process of exchange; who each had some kind of connection to the continent, whether immediate or more distant; and who collectively represented both anglophone and francophone regions of the African diaspora, importantly including diasporas within Africa. We considered people we knew whose work was interdisciplinary, experimental and who would be keen to play. In other words, we were interested in generous practitioners with expansive art practices that defied definition, and who would be interested in creating a shared experience of safety and care. We set about creating the group, making use of our

multilingual capabilities, and were graced with the participation of Elsa M'bala, Floy Krouchi, Simnikiwe Buhlungu, Orakle Ngoy, and Elisabeth Efua Sutherland. We requested that our hosts at the National Theatre of Brittany not participate in our online gatherings, which helped to create the intimacy that marked our time together. A deep and inspiring reciprocity was established, as each of us shared often difficult experiences of navigating the world as black African women. Through the exchange of packages, we were able to engage in honest conversations about migration without our bodies being on the line, for a change. We shared in the pleasures, discomforts, joys and injustices of living in places that we may not have been born in, of moving through the world at that particular time, and any time in which African passports and immigration control create criminals out of people merely trying to move freely. We cried and laughed and were elated and saddened in each other's virtual company, united by a desire to make and share and thus create closeness. The Priority Mail project became a remarkably rich process of collective learning, thinking, questioning, reflecting, sharing and acknowledging our individual and shared artistic heritage. What was celebrated was what the migrant artist is thinking/feeling/confronting between projects, between meetings, between destinations, between responsibilities, and this feature of in-betweenness marks a prominent element of a migrant dramaturgy. The Priority Mail Process Lab was an invitation for artists to show up as they were, without professional posturing, and we hope that it was the first of many opportunities for creative collaboration across borders between exiles, migrants, movers, and refusers.

The inclusion of a WhatsApp group as a way of collectively keeping a kind of residency diary allowed for more casual exchanges in the artists' own time, but also proved to be a useful method of updating each other about the status of our shared activities, sharing resources and communicating the questions that would be discussed in the weekly online sessions. Many of the topics of discussion arose organically out of questions or materials shared in the group chat. The WhatsApp group also provided a mechanism for sharing and tracking each other's travels during the residency period. This was a phenomenon perhaps unique to this time, when one's physical location was both constricted and yet amorphous and where one's participation in an artistic residency did not depend on one's being in the same physical location for its duration.

The main activity of posting materials to one other in the group provided much joy and occasions for playfulness, while also initiating further conversation about the nature of travel between various territories, the notion of giving and receiving inherent in the collaborative process, and the creative possibilities in recognising, projecting or imparting something of value to a virtual stranger. In another contribution to a migrant dramaturgy, Priority Mail enabled us to see what alternative understandings of African migrancy existed between us, understandings that are not pathologised in narratives of displacement, homelessness and identity crisis. Galvanised by each other's stories and histories, it was a truly wonderful pleasure to receive a present from someone who had taken great care in putting together a package to share pieces of themselves with another person.

As can be imagined, the politics of border crossings, which in many ways were embodied in the life stories of all the artists, played out through the sending and receiving of the packages. In some cases, the journey of the packages from sender to receiver was undisrupted, as was the case with packages from Europe to Africa, and in others, the packages were held up, opened, repacked with some items withheld, and only released when additional funds had been paid, as was the case with packages from Africa to Europe. My package from Cape Town to Elsa in Berlin, for example, was opened, searched, some items were removed, and it was withheld until payment was made for the release of what remained of my gift. When the customs duty was not paid on time, my second package to Elsa was returned to me. The package I

received from Floy in Paris, on the other hand, arrived at my door intact within days of being posted. Collectively tracking the journeys of all the packages became an intimate way to share and reflect on our migrant histories and the ongoing implications of oppressive border control practices (for black and brown people in particular). It was important not only that this collective tracking process was documented, but that great care be taken to share moments, glimpses and highlights of our time together, in order to protect the integrity of the 'safe' space that we had co-created.

Nicola Pilkington fulfilled the role and profile of the archivist – the person responsible for collating the digital material, and editing our conversations for public consumption, and this role proved to be essential for the external sharing of the residue of our process. Including the person in charge of such documentation in the online sessions as an observer meant that Pilkington had an inside view of what was being shared and was mindful of moments of sensitivity. We created this role specifically for a person with an established reputation for careful, perceptive, and creative collaborative skills, as well as strong technical capabilities. In the resultant edited videos that were made available to the public, the directness of the gaze and conversational intimacy that was present in the recorded virtual gatherings translate into an intimate and direct experience for the viewer. This was a fascinating discovery that came about specifically because the sessions had been kept closed and private, with the understanding that they would be edited and then collectively reviewed before being uploaded on the website. This was achieved through the atmosphere of trust and openness that had been established through our artist selection, facilitation style, as well as the professionalism of and trust placed in the archivist to appropriately represent extracts of our exchanges without breaching confidentiality and without aiming towards some kind of polished finalised product for public consumption. The aim was to share some parts of the documentation with an online audience as an extension of the project to have migrant life witnessed rather than pathologised.

Conclusion

Migrants are inherently transnational. Leveraging the expansive solidarities of migrant women, the way local struggles extend into other regions by way of their multiple belongings, means adopting a dramaturgical method that reflects complex ties to places, avoiding myopic views of particular localities and complicating easy attachments to terms such as local/global, citizen/migrant and personal/political. A migrant dramaturgy is based on all there is to learn from not being at home in the world, from the restriction of possibilities to what can be learned from staying in places in which we are not entirely welcome. We learn about worlds in which we are not accommodated, which do not expect us to be there; and using the resources of our particulars to challenge the universal, we generate knowledge (Ahmed 2017). Through the creative acts of generosity facilitated by the Priority Mail Process Lab, we mobilised what might be called a migrant attitude, a migritude if you will, towards art making and life, where migritude is understood as a genre of black migrant cultural production. This is an attitude that gives permission to rest and receive while contemplating in community the various refusals that we inhabit and practice, refusals that can be equated with a desire for freedom that Ruth Wilson Gilmore characterises as the possibility of living an unbounded life (in Campt, 2017).

To think about the Process Lab as a work of migritude is to consider how the project was defined by a dramaturgy of displacement (Fleishman 2015), in that movement was the primary feature of the form, content and context of the project. It also addressed Africa as a point of migratory arrival and departure, disrupting notions of the African Diaspora and all the accompanying connotations of extraction *from* the African continent. The intersections of race, gender and migration provided

critical points of orientation for the project and an enduring notion of possibility was established by the gifting of prompts that could be responded to at any time in the future, determined by each of us, and according to our own capacities. This was a particularly resonant discovery in the search for a dramaturgical framework that centres migrant potentiality.

Framing Priority Mail as a project of migritude and a form of feminist praxis, is to suggest that its slow and steady work of imagining this kind of unbounded life, lies in its "ability to keep insisting on something: the ongoing existence of the very things we wish to bring to an end" (Ahmed 2017, 6). The success of Priority Mail rests on the space that was created for black women migrants to meditate collectively on the possibilities of living unbounded lives, and on how we all in our own small ways already are. In *Migritude*, the performance poem, Patel establishes the parameters of a community of migrants with attitudes that are unapologetic in their refusal to hold on to things that diminish them, and their rebellion against things that do. It is this life-giving gesture towards possibility that the Priority Mail Process Lab was able to mobilise and instantiate as a core feature of migrant dramaturgy.

As an experiment in migrant dramaturgy, The Priority Mail Process Lab was defined by virtual residency, analogue exchange and diasporic care practice. It piloted a form of artistic research that was invested in experiential artistic encounters across borders that in this case included the borders of geography, artistic discipline and language. It centred the capacity of the figure of the migrant to disrupt illusions of certainty, stability and fixity in productive ways, by foregrounding mobility, unpredictability, fluidity and surprise. Importantly, it did not aim at producing marketable artistic objects, but instead worked with the idea of sharing some documentation of a process-based experience with an online public. A migrant dramaturgy follows Paul Carter's "framework of thinking that makes the migrant central, not ancillary to historical processes" (1992, 7) and argues for the condition of migrancy itself as being generative of new cultural forms. This necessitates a move away from understanding migrant identities as hopelessly displaced, both physically and psychologically, and forever seeking to be reunified to an original (national) home. Instead, it expands our understanding of how identities and relationships are actively invented and therefore susceptible to reinvention (Carter 2004). Carter argues for migration as not only a cultural and historical fact, but importantly for this project, for migrancy as a poetic attitude, and it is this poetic migrant attitude, or *migritude*, that provides the foundation for a migrant dramaturgy.

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Notes

1. https://thenapministry.com/.
2. Hersey describes 'grind culture' as a "collaboration between white supremacy and capitalism" (Hersey, 2022:11). Grind culture views people as machines.
3. https://www.t-n-b.fr/magazine/africa2020.

"I AM COLOURED": THE MEMOIR AS A DECOLONIAL METHODOLOGY

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This paper explores the shift from a "definitive" to a "descriptive" approach in the context of the coloured identity narrative. It reflects on the challenges of critiquing and redefining coloured culture and identity while still using language that reinforces existing tropes. The author argues for a move towards the descriptive, which allows for a decolonial perspective and self-articulation. The text discusses the use of autoethnography and the creation of a production called (Un)becoming, where personal narratives were explored. It also suggests that published memoirs, such as *Sorry, Not Sorry*, *Because I Couldn't Kill You*, and *Ougat*, contribute to disrupting normative cultural constraints and offer a decolonizing perspective.

Language: From the "Definitive" towards the "Descriptive"

Reviewing the socio-political performance of coloured identity, I discover in the seminal texts engaging with the coloured identity narrative a trend of naming, re-naming, reclarifying of definitions, and explaining exactly what is meant when one declares: "I am coloured." I reflect on the difficulty of proceeding when the very words one must use to critique the creation of a coloured culture or identity narrative disarm the intention of the critique and reinforce the common tropes in the current and historical lexicon. In revisiting the coloured identity narrative through the use of individual and collective memory, I considered disregarding racialised language altogether, but to refuse certain words and their semantics rendered me mute, and thus unable to engage at any level. This is evidence of the "idiosyncratic over-hang from apartheid [...] that the definite words of race still hold such potent and striking symbolic power that their mention calls up immediate and particular meaning. The fact that such language is still so embedded in our vocabulary is a testament to how much racial dismantling still needs to be pursued" (Wentworth 2019a, 7–8).

The obsession with renaming to redefine the concept of "coloured" as an identity has something to do with creating culture (anew) in order to induce a sense of belonging. This pursuit is very different from, and far more complex than, a declaration for/of homogeneity. In fact, it is the direct opposite. It is within heterogeneity that the coloured identity narrative thrives and liberates itself from apartheid-imposed definitions of colouredness. But the term 'heterogenous' has often been too easily invoked by those writing about the coloured identity narrative to refer to something or anything that did not adhere to the accepted definition. In this regard, the term becomes singular, and as such, it is unproductive and dangerous for the coloured identity narrative. It is not the solution to the "caught-between-blackness-and-whiteness" plight. Such a solution should rather afford access to the descriptive, which has the potential to loosen the noose of the definitive. If the categorisation or definition that made classification possible is part and parcel of an apartheid lexicon, socially, politically and historically inherited from colonialism, then any attempt to re-define may do more to cement the status quo than liberate one from it. To re-classify is to operate within the confines established by the conceptual architecture of apartheid. To re-name, even in an attempt to correct, is a reactive form of knowledge production. Bhambra elaborates on Homi K. Bhabha's view of postcolonialism: "This issue is more about re-inscribing 'other' cultural traditions into narratives of modernity and thus transforming those narratives – both historical terms and theoretical ones – rather than simply re-naming or re-evaluating the content of these other 'inheritances'" (Bhambra 2014, 116). I believe that a proactive form of knowledge production is to shift away from the definitive towards the descriptive using a decolonial perspective sought through an autoethnographic lens. An autoethnographic lens provides room for self-articulation as well as a productive contribution to the design of culture.

In 2019, as part of my MA thesis about the coloured identity narrative, I created a production called *(Un)becoming* in my practice-as-research course at the University of Cape Town. My intention was to "break open the narrative by exposing a diversity of lived experiences within the heterogeneous coloured frame that call up the contradictions of a fixed position; and allowing their irrefutable presence to carry the function of penetrative discourse rather than attempting to neatly draw lines of logic in rebuttal of the single narrative of the cultural superstructure" (Wentworth 2019a, 38). I interviewed and video-recorded people who could be considered well-known (although not officially documented) stereotypes of "coloured people":

- The grandmother, often conservative and always judgmental
- The pretty girl who is probably a dancer, the one with straight hair
- The homeless man, often viewed as dangerous
- The drunk promiscuous woman with more children than she can look after.

I asked them about their lives, memories from their childhood, the games they played and who their friends were, what they remember about where they grew up, their experiences of run-ins with the law, etc. I essentially asked open-ended questions that elicited personal narratives and allowed the conversation to meander as much as they wanted it to. It was not primarily the content of their narratives that I was interested in (although the content was fascinating). Rather, I was attentive to the person, how they perceived themselves and what their opinion is/was of the world they inhabited at the various times their memory would allow them to recall and describe. This encouraged a descriptive narrative rather than a definitive one and respected the agency of the narrator. Although not knowing it at the time, I was asking them to engage in an autoethnographic practice.

An Autoethnographic Lens

Loosely defined, 'autoethnography' is a description and analysis of one's experience of one's own culture (Ellis et al. 2011). Closer to the agenda of this study is the description of autoethnography by Gringrich-Philbrook: "The term 'autoethnography' designates a wide array of textual practices [...]. Though sometimes thought of as a 'method,' autoethnography strikes me more as a broad orientation towards scholarship than a specific procedure" (2005, 298). Or again, autoethnography makes a concerted effort to offer "a critique of *self and society, self in society, and self as resistant and transformative force of society*" (Alexander 2005, emphasis in original). In this way, self-narratives are capable of offering a decolonial perspective on culture and the construction of it.

In *(Un)becoming*, I took the transcribed interviews into a rehearsal room with four actors, who all self-identify as coloured (to varying degrees). Their familiarity with the material was palpable. While the rehearsal process and a full analysis of the production are beyond the scope of this paper, what is important to note is that the actors chose the interviewees they wanted to engage with and portray. The actors contributed to the creative process and had the opportunity to insert themselves into the work by sharing their personal memories and experiences. They were asked to respond physically to the source material. What emerged was a production in fragments. As I wrote, "[i]n the staging, the work will consider the linearity of theme before concerning itself with linear timelines, layering identity narratives that are diverse and that portray images that are non-static in their representation" (Wentworth 2019, 40). While some have critiqued self-narrative as self-indulgent and narcissistic (Gentile, 1989, cited in Alexander 2005) – an accusation perhaps sometimes justified – it is, more importantly, a form of cultural performance. Françoise Liannet (1989) claims that autoethnography "transcends pedestrian notions of referentiality, for the staging of the event is part of the process of 'passing on', of elaborating cultural forms, which are not static and inviolable but dynamically involved in the creation of culture itself" (102, cited in Alexander 2005, 422). The self and culture exist symbiotically (De Munck 2000, cited in Chang 2008), and it is in this interface that meaning is created. Applying autoethnography as praxis offers autonomy over narrative from personally lived experience. Lived experience operates through the body in the capture and examination of memory, which is inevitably a fragmented process. The nonlinearity of memory, as demonstrated in *(Un)becoming*, could be seen as critical self-authorship. The description of self and community refutes 'box-

ing' and is counter-definitive, steering language away from the constraints of definition and towards description, both creatively and critically. The coloured identity narrative has already gone to battle with definition in so many ways. One needs only to think back to the absurdity of the "pencil test" to know how arbitrary yet violent definition can be in the hands of those who entrench epistemological violence for their own benefit. In the context of the coloured identity narrative, critical self-authorship can be an act of decolonisation.

The Memoir

With the understanding that all self-narratives, in all their iterations, are productive, I propose that the literary genre of memoir productively assume an autoethnographic lens for the coloured identity narrative. Liberated from the definitive, authors describe their lives, communities, parents and cultural experiences while engaging with identity. At the beginning of Shana Fife's memoir, *Ougat* (2021), she declares that the events that she describes in the memoir are told from her memory and her perspective. Making clear that "memory and truth are subjective" (2021), Fife insists on acceptance of the fact that perspective will always be at play. Because the memoirist has the control to remember freely and choose the events, situations, contexts, and moments for inclusion, there is relief from the elitist discrimination that Mbembe believes the 'archive' is implicated in. In his essay, "The Power of the Archive and its Limits" (2002), Mbembe asserts that the state is responsible for judging what contents make up 'the archive' and what is discarded. In the memoir, the author herself decides. This process inevitably begins to subvert the power and authority of the archive, a subversion which holds the potential to liberate the narrative from the centre of authority. A personal narrative is not more substantial, but more particular, able to escape the homogenising reach of general commentary. The coloured identity narrative is placed in the hands of those who experience and choose to engage with the narrative, giving *them* power through self-authorship.

Literary Case Studies

I offer a brief overview of three memoirs to demonstrate the productivity of the descriptive in the context of the coloured identity narrative. The memoirs are *Sorry, Not Sorry: Experiences of a Brown Woman in a White South Africa* (2018), by Haji Mohamed Dawjee; *Because I Couldn't Kill You* (2019), by Kelly-Eve Koopman; and *Ougat: From a Hoe into a Housewife and Then Some* (2021), by Shana Fife. All were written by women, each of whom, in their unique way, declares "I am coloured." My aim is to demonstrate that these texts, and others like them, create a canon of work where culture is located, and actively do so from a decolonising perspective. After all, "decolonization is a process by which Indigenous people dismantle and deconstruct Eurocentric ideologies that impose superiority and privilege over Indigenous communities while honoring the Indigenous ways of knowing and being" (Cull et al. 2018, cited in Pham & Gothberg, 2020: 4096).

The narratives in these memoirs do not purport to define or even redefine the coloured identity narrative, but through descriptions of their lived experience (as in *(Un)becoming*, Wentworth 2019b) contribute to disrupting normative ideological and cultural constraints.

In *Sorry, Not Sorry* (2018), Haji Mohamed Dawjee has a chapter titled: "Begging to be white?" Here she reveals her relationship to whiteness growing up in Cape Town in the early 1990s:

> The global map suffocates me, and not by accident. It is an intentional asphyxiation. We can move from place to place to avoid the white privilege that surrounds us, but our strangulation is inevitable. It encloses. It meets us at the bank, it seats us at restaurants, it talks to us on the radio, it plays in front of us on television and it stares at us in print. The 'whites only' signs have been removed, but destroying physical evidence means nothing when the ideologies have stayed behind and continue to be recycled.
>
> They're a constant reminder of a race we're meant to run, every day. Our lane is filled with hurdles. White people compete too, but in their lane it's a relay. Each one of them runs a shorter distance and leans on a system of support to guarantee consecutive wins. We've been subjected to a crippling variety of disadvantages from the beginning. And the race remains challenging. Mostly because equality is inconceivable and discrimination doesn't need a lot of imagination. It never has.
>
> In her book *Americanah*, Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie writes about the difference in racial awareness between white people and black people: 'Race doesn't really exist for you because it has never been a barrier. Black folks don't have that choice.' There is so much truth in this. When last did you live a day without thinking about the colour of your skin and how you would be treated because of it at any moment? This is not a comment on a lack of pride or ownership of identity. Just because this awareness lingers in the back of our minds does not mean we're not proud of who we are. (37–38)

Dawjee goes on to describe, in careful detail, what she would do if she were white. This is not an aspirational tract, but an appraisal of the larger racial and socio-political system. Later in the book, Dawjee writes a letter of resignation to whiteness and comments on a relationship that is dependent on skirting the boundary between colouredness and whiteness. This aspirational myth is critiqued throughout her chapters.

In the same vein, in *Because I Couldn't Kill You* (2019) Kelly-Eve Koopman employs memories of Christmas to craft metaphors of popular baked goods to describe coloured traditions and the inscription of whiteness on them.

> Christmases in our household were filled with recycled glass coffee jars of home-baked biscuits and tons and tons of Hertzoggies, cheap, sweet, a favourite of the oldies and easy to make. If you didn't grow up in a traditional coloured or Malay household, Hertzoggies are little jam and coconut tarts for special occasions, named after Boer War General JBM Hertzog, famous for his views advocating the minority rights of poor, oppressed Afrikaners and protecting the priceless, endangered vestiges of Afrikaans culture. [...] There's a lot going on in the [above] brief, somewhat historical anecdote. For one it shows the long heritage my people have had of expressing emotion with baked goods, and the equally long legacy of conservative Afrikaners handing out saccharine promises to the coloured community, holding out the sweet dangling carrot cake of white proximity, always in front of the slender noses of those of us bred with the right kind of mixed blood, to keep us galloping after their dark horses for generations. An inheritance the DA is all too happy to ride to death. And if I haven't already beat enough symbolism into the delicate pastry shells of these special-occasion fancies, there is also the unfortunate reminder that it is not only in the recent history that we custard-coloured colonial subjects, we who worked in the kitchens and bedrooms of *die baas*, would forsake our darker brothers and sisters, in tragic displays of betrayal and self-loathing, to get a little taste of the just desserts of whiteness, which in this context is of course milk tart. Another sturdy traditional dessert is the fruit cake.... (98–99)

The memoir offers an opportunity to speak back to social issues on a broad spectrum, from a personal vantage point. Shana Fife, author of *Ougat* (2021), employs anecdotes and weaves stories together to comment on abuse under the guise of discipline for the coloured child. In so doing, she calls up what is common or known to other members of the community, requesting review on the subject matter, as well as on the self.

> In the Coloured community I grew up in, all of my friends and acquaintances got hidings from their parents. Being grounded was for white children. We didn't come from families who could afford to give us an allowance, never mind withhold it from us as punishment. Coloured laaities were moered (at least, those of us from respectable homes). We would be so desensitized to violence that we would all share the stories of how our parents hit us and laugh at whoever's story was the most erg. Besides, we saw people die in the roads we lived in more often that we should have. Complaining about a few warme, deserved klappe was childish; and the last thing a Coloured child wanted to be was 'like a laaitie'. 'Remember that day your taani moered you with a bag of rollers?' I would ask my friend and laugh. 'Yoh, […] You were kak cross.' And my friend would laugh with me, because the offences were just part of our lives. (21–22)

In the popular imagination, coloured people are associated with violence, whether through gangsterism, alcoholism, poverty, or gender-based violence (GBV). Fife offers a critique of this by describing how she was raised, providing some context on how close to violence the coloured child lives. Here, parents and child-raising are questioned within the community, by describing violence from a perspective also within the community. There is no stereotype, only familiarity.

When one tells personal stories, the community is ineluctably implicated. On a macro scale, all members who engage with the coloured identity narrative can place themselves in the situations described because they are familiar. They mirror what is known, but with enough distance for critique. Chang purports that "although self-narratives focus on the author, self-stories often contain more than self. The irony of self-narratives is that they are of self but not self alone. Others often enter self-narratives as persons intimately and remotely connect to self" (2008, 33). By describing family members with nuanced sensitivity, they too are inscribed into a common history. Dawjee evokes her father thus:

> My dad is a tough man. His life has made him resilient. His is a typical zero-to-hero story, but it's not run-of-the-mill. A boy from the slums of Marabastad managing to become a professor of orthodontics at the University of Pretoria is not an average narrative. It's the opposite. It's a plot thick with struggle and adversity. Each sentence heavy with overcoming: overcoming race, economics and social power. All these variables and more have made him a hard man. There are many intermissions in the course of a life, and it's usually in those intermissions that we take a step back to collect our thoughts and compose ourselves. […] In Islam, death is not the end; it is only the beginning. Life in the world, with all its material inclusions, is a borrowed experience. It is an exam a Muslim must write for the reward of eternal life. This world ends. The next goes on forever. This is an important theme in Islamic theology. If a Muslim lives well, and has used their one chance on earth to prepare for an eternal life to come, death is only a transition. A bridge between the seen and the unseen universe. Death is nothing to fear, especially to the faithful and the righteous. […] In 2015 my dad was diagnosed with a brain tumour. He told us on Mother's Day. (12–14)

Here Dawjee, through describing her father invokes the Muslim ethos of living and the role religion played in her upbringing. Religion is part and parcel of the coloured identity narrative. Dawjee reveals that religion is not incidental to the coloured experience, but rather something ingrained in all aspects of the self.

In another chapter, Dawjee threads her ideas about feminism and patriarchy through an account of her mother:

> My mom is a tough woman. She's independent, she's feisty and she doesn't suffer fools. She can pack more into one day than I could accomplish in a week: run a household, manage my dad's office, throw in a yoga class and still have time to bake biscuits – if she feels like it.
>
> Call her a feminist, though, and she might just have a heart attack. Yet to me, she embodies a type of feminism we don't hear much about. She's strong. She's creative. But she's also a product of patriarchy and prejudice. She has not been subjected to the physical abuse a lot of women suffer, but because of the place that society carved out for her, she chose, in many ways, to be timid while I was growing up. In order to survive, she maintained a degree of invisibility and a reluctance to challenge authority.
>
> That's not considered politically progressive by our modern feminist standards. (111)

Koopman utilises story to relay details of her mother in the chapter titled "My Mother Wears a Secret Shade of Red":

> My mother and I are lying next to each other in her bed. We've spent a lazy day napping, eating pancakes, watching cooking shows, talking about books. My mother is slowly learning how to rest without feeling guilty about it. Over the years, I have seldom seen her truly relax. To be fair, doing nothing was never a ready option for her. She is a single mother who has supported three emotionally demanding children. She also has a doctorate and a master's degree from Harvard. My mother is beautiful, with an open oval face and a halo of beautifully greying natural curls; she has never worn even a smudge of make-up. She has problems with her knees and ankles and so can only wear Green Cross pumps or Crocs. She occupies a powerful position at a university and really enjoys her job. She owns her own property and is smart with her finances, she gives incredibly generously and I know for a fact that she's a mother/mentor figure to many of her students. My mother is also an ex-con. Well, rather an ex political prisoner. (54–55)

Fife makes her mother known by describing what it was like being raised by her.

> My mother was a staunch woman. She is still alive and has changed over the years, but when I was a child, the leash around my neck was very short and very limiting. She controlled everything, from the clothes I wore (well into my late teens), to the strict curfew I was given on the rare occasion that I was allowed out. I knew very little about her as a person, which I think was deliberate on her part. My opinion on 'boomers', the generation she is from, is that they didn't want children to be too familiar with them – it made them fallible. Their generation believes that familiarity breeds contempt, but I think their disconnect with the generation they birthed is perhaps the definition of what 'contempt' really is. I was raised at arm's length. (42–43)

I quote these authors at some length to demonstrate the power and subtlety of invoking the descriptive. It takes time and must be given space to breathe and craft itself to slowly echo, in my experience, in all its familiarity.

Conclusion

Each case study is so different and has little to do with any other. It is safe to say that the authors had different agendas when writing their memoirs. But when placed beside each other, not for comparison but for gradation, a canon of sorts begins to emerge. In this canon of work, form meets content in the decolonial project, and works towards productively advancing the coloured identity narrative.

It must be emphasised that this is not a comparative analysis. It is placing voices beside each other that might otherwise have been considered 'the same person' because they are all coloured females, of about the same age, and they live in Cape Town. They also identify as coloured and they, through placing their lived experiences in the public domain, have also placed "indigenous people at the *center* of the study, using the lens of Indigenous people and respecting the cultural values, beliefs, and teachings of the communities" (Pham & Gothberg 2020, 4095 [emphasis in original]). This is an act of decoloniality that promotes the coloured identity narrative through description, employing language that liberates itself from the definitive. The authors actively contribute to the coloured identity narrative by evoking lineage, historical pain and ritual. "It is unproductive to attempt to give absolute answers to the questions of what identifying as coloured might mean, especially in a post-apartheid, decolonised, South African setting, as the conclusive approach to reading identity, I suggest, is a fundamental part of the problem" (Wentworth 2019a, 9). I hope to have demonstrated that an autoethnographic lens operating in memoir shows itself as a promising decolonising methodology.

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EXPLORING THE TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL OF PRACTICE-BASED DESIGN RESEARCH (PBDR) METHODS IN ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN PEDAGOGY

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This paper discusses the application of practice-based design research (PbDR) methods in transforming the design practice of architecture students. It explores how reflection and diffraction, two PbDR methods, can be used to shape students' design practice and challenge institutional biases. The author shares the experience of implementing these methods in a third-year architecture design studio at the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa. Changes were made to the curriculum, including the introduction of reflection and the use of diffractive methods, to foster personal and institutional transformation. The paper highlights the importance of collaborative dialogue, social reflection, and engaged pedagogy in this transformative process.

Practice-based design research (PbDR) methods have proved to be transformative for the design practice of established and early career practitioners in various post-graduate programmes. At the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) in Australia, established architects "reflect upon their own mastery within a critical framework"; that is, through speculating about the future directions of their practice by looking at their ongoing work (Van Schaik 2004) they can transform their design practice. At the University College London's Faculty of the Built Environment (The Bartlett), practice-based design research is used to speculate on the future of design practice by continuing a long tradition of architectural research incorporating a "productive relationship between drawing, text and building … multi-directional [so that] … drawing may lead to building, writing to drawing or building to drawing and writing" (Hill 2013).

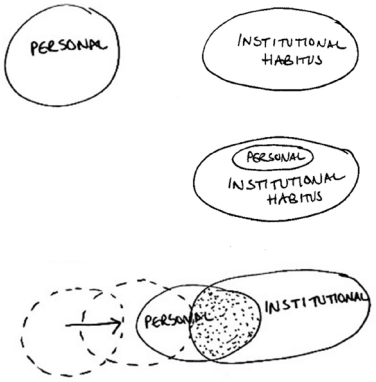


Figure 1 Diagram exploring personal and institutional habitus as per Payne – how success at the institution reveals a correlation between the student's personal habitus with that of the institution's, and how students are most often expected to adjust their personal habitus to the institution's

I sought to explore whether these same methods could also have a transformative effect on students' design practice. The obvious limitation in applying PbDR to third-year students at the undergraduate level when compared to mid-career architects in doctoral programmes is the much smaller sample of projects that students have to use as data for the PbDR reflections. The counterpoint to this constraint is that students' smaller body of work has not been buffeted by commercial restraints and, in many ways, students reveal their own design fascinations in adventurous projects without the limitations imposed by professional practice.

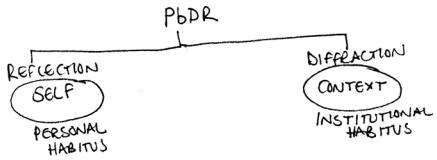


Figure 2 Diagram of Practice-based design research (PbDR) methods of reflection and diffraction and their application to personal and institutional habitus, with the reflection being a personal methodology of the self, whereas diffraction acting on and revealing the context, in this case, the institution

The architecture design studio as a site of higher learning is a microcosm of the university as a whole, reflecting its power dynamics. Jennifer Payne, a researcher who investigated the role of cultural capital and habitus[1] in architectural education, notes that the greater the correlation between a student's personal habitus or cultural capital and that of the institution, the greater success they achieve in their studies (Payne 2015). Lecturers reward those students who think like them and are more critical of students whose practice and ways of thinking diverge from their own. This reveals an institutional bias that can only be countered if the gap between the student's personal habitus and the institutional habitus is narrowed.

The work done in the third-year architecture design studio at the School of Architecture and Planning of the University of the Witwatersrand from 2019 to 2022 has aimed at bringing the personal and the institutional closer. On the personal level, students have worked on developing confidence in their own voice validating their life experience and background, thereby validating their personal habitus. At the institutional level, there has been critical acknowledgement of and engagement with the systemic issues that might be actively or passively working against the students' best efforts to succeed.

How Would One Apply PbDR in an Architectural Design Studio to Transform Student Practice?

Although practice-based design research methods of reflection and diffraction were introduced to the third-year architectural curriculum, their application to undergraduate study has a different purpose and context from where these methods emerged.

Reflection is a practice-based design research method introduced by the RMIT to bring to light through self-reflection such mastery as exists in mid- to late-career architects. Students similarly use reflection to focus on the self, working on their view of themselves and their habitus. The difference is that students are still devel-

oping their design practice, so the reflection assists in the process of finding and validating their own design voice and its origins. The transformative potential is that students will be less vulnerable to institutional bias if they develop a greater level of confidence and value their diverse design experiences positively in their design development journey.

Diffraction as a practice-based design research method emerged not from the RMIT programmes, with their focus on individual reflection, but rather from feminist research exploring the influence of context on the production of knowledge. Diffraction focuses on the students' context and the institution, critically examining and transforming the institutional habitus by revealing institutional bias and working to subvert it.

I started as a design lecturer in 2019 and inherited a 2018 syllabus predicated on the normative studio master model.[2] The first student project of that year, entitled *Manifesto*, had students analysing both their own past projects and a list of "master" architects' projects issued by the lecturer, and then drawing up a personal manifesto of who they were as designers. From 2019 to 2023, several changes were made to the brief of the *Manifesto* project to shift both the personal and the institutional habitus.

In 2019, on the level of personal habitus, the practice-based design research methodology of reflection was added, to encourage students not only to analyse their past body of work but also to reflect on it, seeking an understanding of what fascinated them across multiple projects, identifying issues to which they returned and re-explored in different ways. The aim was to begin to work on the personal level – to show students that each one of them had a particular viewpoint on design.

Reflection as a practice-based design research (PbDR) method has been used by various architectural postgraduate programmes internationally to unearth understanding and tacit knowledge of practice. Their example resulted in the following types of reflection being added to the project brief:

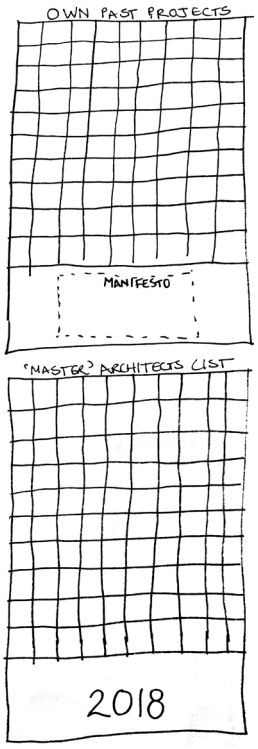


Figure 3 Manifesto project in 2018 – the inherited brief produced posters in a grid format – with very little interrogation as to the learning and tacit knowledge it could reveal

- *Reflecting on the student's body of work:* Reflecting on past practice, a type of curatorial, reflective, and retrospective practice that RMIT initiated through their so-called "Invitational Program"[3] that evidenced already established mastery in mid-career and established architects (in many cases award-winning architects).
- *Reflecting in the act of re-drawing their archive through fast hand-drawn sketches:* Schon's Reflective Practitioner revealed a practitioner's capacity for reflection during practice, evidencing an "intuitive knowing during action" that he termed "reflection-in-action." He demonstrated how this "knowing-in action" unites theory, research and practice, thought and action (Schon 1984).
- *Reflecting for future projects:* The RMIT programme reflects on past practice to transform future practice, "reading, looking within creative work for something that you're not sure what it is, perhaps you don't necessarily find it at all, maybe what you find is its direction which is its future" (Jennifer Lowe, in Van Schaik and Johnson 2019). As a counterpoint, the Bartlett Postgraduate programmes in Design do not reflect on past practice but rather imagine through design and theory new future practices.

Reflection is a cyclical PBDR method moving between, into, through and for practice, involving "acting and thinking as a continuum" (Lucas 2016, 43). Gray and Malins note that "we learn most effectively by doing," and adapt this principle into a "reflection-for-action" looping process where reflection on and evaluation of past practices yields to reflection in the present through insight and questioning, and reflection for future needs and hopes (Gray and Malins 2004). Blythe similarly speaks of a synthesised reflection model with different types of reflection happening simultaneously: retrospectively reflecting on the body of work; reflecting in the act of making, draw-

ing or designing, where reflecting and designing are simultaneous; and reflecting for future works that occurs in the act of designing current work, including "social reflection" (Blythe 2013).

"Social reflection" was added to the brief for the *Manifesto* project in the Wits third-year design curriculum, where students were paired to reflect on and tease out new insights into their own and each other's work.

Here learning takes place in non-hierarchical, multiple iterations and exchanges between the individual student and the world. It happens through language and other social contact. "Social reflection" (Blythe 2013) or "reflective conversation" (Ghaye and Ghaye 1998) is thus a collaborative dialogue that seeks answers to the questions posed by past practice, but also looks forward, venturing future possibilities for practice and thereby transforming practice. It builds on Finlay's introspective self-dialogue (Finlay 2003) but takes it one step further, a "reflective conversation" that moves from private self-dialogue to a public or collaborative dialogue articulated with others, and in so doing progressing from "unconscious into conscious forms of knowing" (Ghaye and Ghaye 1998). Reflective social dialogue is also much more than a method, it is an "open and mediating concept" (Buchert 2014) that seeks to ask questions about the situation and positioning of the researcher and their challenges and engagement with the subject. There is therefore reflection on "awareness of the interpretive act" (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2018), involving reflecting on the methods of research, the representation of the research and how these factors affect the research in ways of which the researcher is often unconscious. This process is overlaid on the methodological cyclical reflective loops and endows the process with meaning.

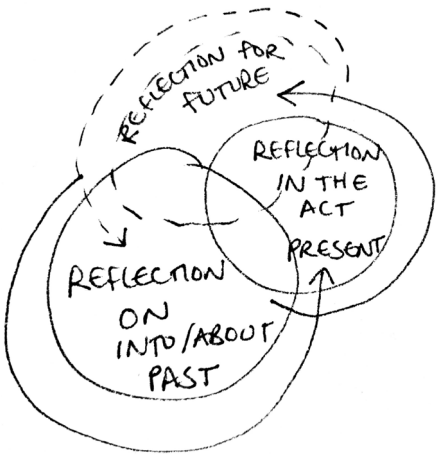


Figure 4 Diagram of reflective research loops on/in/for practice

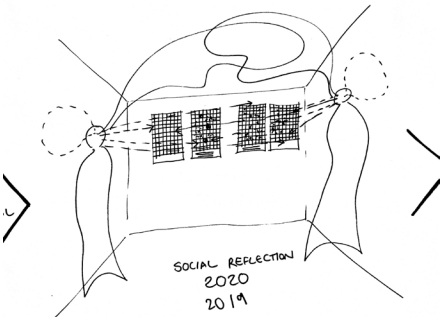


Figure 5 Social reflection in the studio with two students reflecting on each other's work

Barad's diffraction (2007) and Haraway's situatedness (1988) were added to the process to disrupt the cyclical inward reflection and instead reveal the material conditions of the institutional context. Haraway extended critical or strong reflexivity into "situated knowledge" (Haraway 1988), which still centres the researcher but highlights how the knowledge produced reflects the researcher's position in a particular social context and the conditions in which the knowledge was produced. Haraway moved firmly into a relational ontological perspective,[4] reinforcing Barad's "diffraction" (Barad 2014), which sees the human as one agent within an entangled network of human and non-human agents that includes objects and materiality, in this way decentring the human subject altogether.

Diffraction radiates outward from the student, and through "intra-action" (Barad) between the institutional habitus and the students' personal habitus, the boundaries of both are shifted. The diffractive view called into question the context created for the *Manifesto* project, especially by the list of 25 master architects' projects issued to students. This had previously included only one female, one African, and one South African architect. The list was expanded to be more representative, broadening the range of architects worthy of study to include more architects of colour, female architects and South African and African architects.

The outcomes of the students' work from 2019 onwards show the beginnings of an attempt to represent reflection across projects within the grid framework of the original project, with unifying concepts across projects depicted through graphic representation such as geometric shapes, colour and line.

After some critical reflection on the outcomes of the 2019 *Manifesto* project, more changes were made in 2020. On the institutional level, diffractive methods disrupted the studio master model with the introduction of a parallel engaged pedagogy.

This parallel engaged pedagogy merges the pedagogies of transformation of Freire, De Sousa Santos and bell hooks and applies them to a South African architectural

studio. All three are rooted in the physical or metaphorical contexts of the global South, teaching oppressed, marginalised or diverse communities and therefore particularly relevant to the South African context. Their relational, collaborative, dialogical and engaged pedagogies were borne out of the constructivist mode, placing the impetus on the students' own learning and understanding. Freire's co-responsible model of education rejected the banking model of education and instead encouraged students to develop a critical awareness of their social, political and economic reality by exploring together and alongside each other (2017). De Sousa Santos's *Epistemologies of the South* sought a "knowing with, understanding, facilitating, sharing and walking alongside" students (2014, 9). Freire's idea of conscientisation, in terms of which the student is made aware of their context, appears in bell hooks as the "critical awareness and engagement" of active participants. Her theorising extends Freire's critical pedagogy to an "engaged pedagogy" that sees education as a practice of freedom, where learning arises from an interactive relationship between student and teacher, emphasising the well-being and self-actualisation of both (hooks 1994, 14–20). It is this emphasis on well-being and self-actualisation that differentiates the parallel engaged pedagogy from the traditional studio master model. The parallel-engaged pedagogy is enacted in the studio with me sitting with students, re-drawing my archive while they do the same.

The purpose was to dismantle the institutional, systemic hierarchy inherent in the relationship between student and teacher in the studio by subverting the traditional studio master model (see footnote 2).

The parallel-engaged pedagogy expanded the social reflection activity from pairs of students to between the lecturers and the class. Two lecturers enacted the social reflection around a personal spatial narrative poster, engaging the whole class, and deriving meaning from understanding their own work and context of practice. The social reflection that this public dialogue facilitates occurs through the contextualisation of the researcher, and an initially non-discursive presentation that becomes discursive, where the lecturers and the students "co-construct knowledge and meaning in a collaborative interaction from which both take away new ideas, knowledge, skills and understanding" (Hughes 2012). This expanded social reflection was filmed, adding another layer to which the lecturer could return for further reflection.

Students were also encouraged to change the organisation of their *Manifesto* posters from the 2019 grid to a reflective narrative structure entitled Ways of Seeing, seeking to represent the link between projects through a narrative or conceptual structure rather than the grid framework of previous years.

In 2021 the *Manifesto* project moved online because of the Covid pandemic and became a series of disembodied voices discussing work shared on an online platform. The brief now focused more on the personal spatial narrative, encouraging students to understand and unpack where their particular way of seeing or spatial practice originated from. The project encouraged the students who were stuck at home to reflect on their familiar environment and how it shaped their design practice. Continuing the parallel engaged pedagogy, I posted my own drawings on online visual pin-up platforms alongside the students and shared my self-ethnographic research on my ways of seeing and practising.

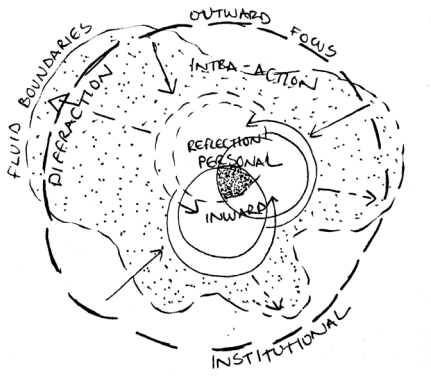


Figure 6 Diffraction breaks apart the self-introspective reflection by focusing outward on institution

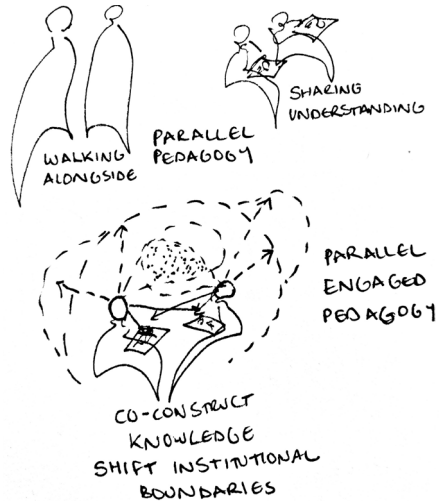


Figure 7 Parallel-engaged pedagogy– teacher walks alongside the student, sharing understanding, co-constructing knowledge and shifting institutional boundaries

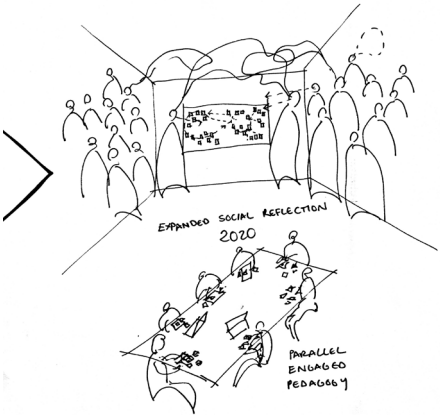


Figure 8 Expanded social reflection as part of the parallel engaged pedagogy

Digital access was a double-edged sword: on the one hand, it exposed students' unequal access to the digital world, exacerbating previous inequalities; but on the other hand, it afforded students intimate access to each other's entire design process on online pin-up boards.

We countered the inequalities that had come into sharp focus by moving to student-led, agile and adaptable strategies, meeting with students at times that suited their data, doing telephonic or WhatsApp crits when required, and organising data and loaned laptops before the university-wide programmes had been initiated. To support the newly available access to every student's design process, the brief broke up each step with deliverables to be posted online accompanied by built-in peer review. This online peer review replicated to a degree the peer-to-peer learning of the physical studio, whilst taking it a step further, given the permanent access to other students' work processes.

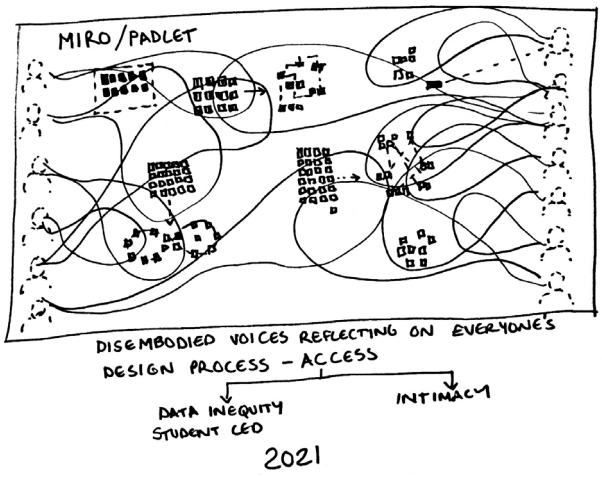


Figure 9 Manifesto project online revealed contested accessibility – intimate access vs data inequity

The student outcomes displayed a move to deeper, more personal reflection, with students unearthing the origins of their design processes both in the manifestoes and in the reflective personal narrative posters, as well as through written personal spatial narratives.

The year 2022 started with hybrid learning, with the aim of incorporating the positive aspects of online learning (intimate access to the whole class's design process) with in-studio tasks.

The spatial memory drawing that one student had drawn in 2021 as part of their personal spatial narrative became part of the *Manifesto* project for all students. The personal spatial memory expanded the reflective exercises in the manifesto project to a time before the students commenced architectural education. Its purpose was to unearth each student's personal spatial habitus, their particular spatial perspective formed through early childhood spatial experiences. The personal spatial memory drawing is a "primal image"[5] (Bachelard 1964, xv) of a haunting and unforgettable space that is part of each student's personal history:

> each one of us, then, should speak of his roads, his crossroads, his roadside benches; each one should make a surveyor's map of his lost fields and meadows …Thus we cover the universe with drawings we have lived. These drawings need not be exact. They need only to be tonalized on the mode of our inner space. (Bachelard 1964, 11–12)

Personal spatial memory drawings are similar to Claire Cooper Marcus's "memory-sketching" (Sarvimäki 2017, 74–82), where students draw spatial or environmental memories and thereby reveal "environmental autobiographies" (Marcus 2014). Marcus noted the transformational effect the project had on her students, with one student noting that "[t]his is the first time in my whole student experience that anyone has said my life is of any consequence" (Marcus 2014, 35).

The object of the exercise with Wits students was to begin to validate each student's spatial autobiography, to unearth a sense of identity and reveal students' spatial values and biases. The parallel engaged pedagogy continued with the whole design teaching team doing the personal spatial memory exercise alongside students and sharing both the drawing and what it revealed about their spatial autobiographies. The hybrid model worked well, with intimate access to each other's design processes online and engagement with and drawing alongside each other on campus.

On an institutional level, the architects list to be studied was expanded to include at least two Wits alumni architects chosen by students. This inclusion prompted discussions unpacking institutional influence, asking whether Wits's architectural education had any particular emphasis, or even resulted in a common architectural style, design process or way of practising. Historically the Wits school of architecture had a strong Modernist focus in the early twentieth century, which started to shift to a more regionalist, artistic and craft focus under Pancho Guedes in the late twentieth century and to a more urban and city focus in the early twenty-first century. Through this focus on institutional influence, students were urged to see how their personal spatial habitus differed or matched the Wits school of architecture design habitus, and how studying at Wits altered, complemented, or contested the personal spatial habitus that they arrived with. Exposing these differences gave students further encouragement to value the beginnings of their spatial design journeys and to see how these added complexity, shade, and density to their design practice. In sum, in the years 2019 to 2022, the *Manifesto* project has served to reveal students' personal habitus and bring it closer to the institutional habitus through reflective and diffractive practice-based design research methods.

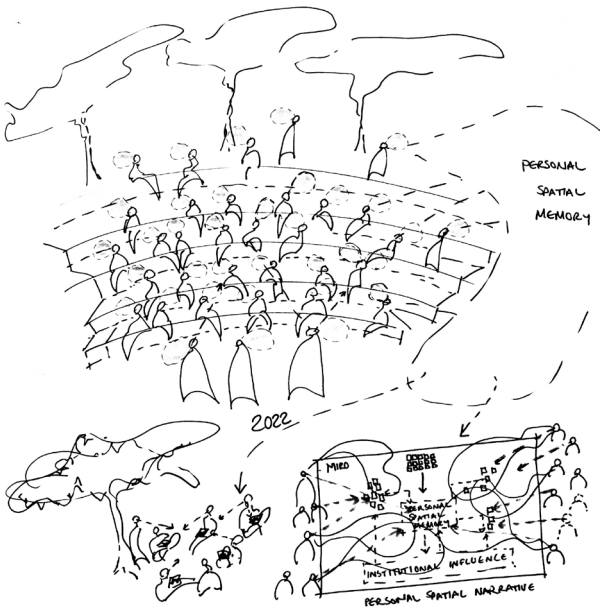


Figure 10 Personal spatial memory exercise completed outside in the Wits amphitheatre due to Covid with the three lecturers in front sharing how their personal spatial memories reveal particular personal architectural values and attitudes to design. The reflection on these memories was taken through to in-person group discussions and online postings on Miro.

On a personal level, practice-based design research methods have encouraged students to value their own spatial design origins and ways of seeing through self-reflection, social reflection, and personal spatial narratives. They have critically engaged with the institutional habitus through diffractive mappings of the institutional influence and a parallel engaged design pedagogy that encouraged collaboration, countered the institutional hierarchy and expanded their conception of who matters.

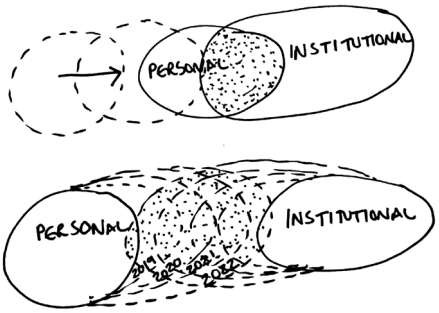


Figure 11 Personal and Institutional habitus moving closer to each other through PbDR methods applied from 2019 to 2022 at Wits SOAP

Students' realisation that their perceptions of space are valid and productive for their design development encourages them to engage critically with the institution's curriculum and technologies of power designed to make them into professional architects. This confidence is enabled by the validation of their personal spatial habitus, and embodies the transformative potential of applying practice-based design research methods to architectural design pedagogy.

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Notes

1. "Habitus"(Bourdieu 1977) a term meaning cultural capital, "broadly defined as a representation of one's cultural value, and includes a variety of traits and behaviours, such as posture, dress, language, preferences, academic credentials and social networks" (Payne 2015,10).
2. The studio master model replicates the apprenticeship model for professionalisation in the studio, where the teacher is seen as a master, and students mimic the master. This model reflects Foucault's micro-technologies of power (1980) and has been characterised as "tight control, coercion and molding" (Dutton 1991, 167; Webster 2008, 71).
3. Van Schaik, a South African architect and academic who founded and commenced the practice-based design research masters programmes at RMIT as invitational programs in the 1980s. These developed into the current RMIT international PhD programmes run in Australia and Asia, as well as Europe's RMIT and Adapt-R (European-funded) programmes (Blythe and Stamm 2017). Leon Van Schaik (2004; 2013), Laurene Vaughan (2017), Richard Blythe (2013) (Blythe and Stamm 2017) and others from RMIT have written extensively on their experience in practice-based design research.
4. Ontology, the study of the nature of being, is divided into objective and subjective ontology. Relational ontology notes that you cannot understand an object apart from your subjective understanding of it, and is "an ongoing process in which matter and meaning are co-constituted" (Bozalek and Zembylas 2017, 2) where meaning arises not only from the object but from its relation to other objects and to the subject studying it.
5. Bachelard's "primal images" (1964, xv) focus on the "experience of the primitiveness of refuge, and especially beyond situations that have been experienced and dreamed: the centers of simplicity – the oneiric house, the hut, animal dwellings (shells and nests), a series of primal images of architecture (drawers, chests, wardrobes), and the childhood home, all of which have a quality of intimacy and which bring out the primitiveness in us" (NoorMohammadi 2015, 72).

PASSING THROUGH FRAGMENTED SCRIBBLES: MOVING TOWARDS MOVEMENT, DANCE AND CHOREOGRAPHY GROUNDED IN THE EMBODIED ECOSOMATIC PARADIGM

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This paper explores the artistic creation and embodied practice-led research in the context of creating an ensemble screendance titled "Fragmented Scribbles." The work explores the embodied scribbles of knowledge that exist within conversations among intellectual, emotional, physical, social, aesthetic, creative, and spiritual realms. The research prioritizes the whole being as a site of artistic exploration, using Passing Through as a pedagogical method. The ecological perception and ecosomatic paradigm are employed to cultivate mindfulness, perceive relationships, develop conceptual flexibility, re-perceive depth, and intentionally use the imagination. The study also examines the unique narratives and associations between internal and physical ecologies of the performers and their sites of performance.

> There is an embodied language that cannot be articulated in words nor whispered in the deepest, wildest thoughts. These are brief scribbles... Fragmented Scribbles capture moments of endless embodied conversations in one's body, mind and spirit.

The process of artistic creation forms sediments of fertile soil to be excavated by embodied practice-led research. This can result in creative work or can be documented through reflections, writings, and sometimes illegible scribbles of thoughts to be explored yet further in practice. The process of creating an ensemble version of a screendance titled "Fragmented Scribbles" became a point of departure for unearthing and bringing to the fore embodied scribbles of knowledge that exist in the endless conversations among intellectual, emotional, physical, social, aesthetic, creative and spiritual realms that culminate in the body of the mover/dancer/choreographer/creative (Sööt & Viskus 2014, 291). This knowledge resides in the personal ecologies of the six interns – Fezidingo Kibi, Sinenhlanhla Sihlangu, Vuyo Ndawonde, Muhle Mahlangu, Zanoxolo Nkosi and Ayanda Mshengu – as well as of myself and Nicholas Aphane, as facilitators of the creative and technical training processes. The approach prioritises the whole being as a site of artistic research by using Passing Through as a pedagogical method. The method applies Sewall's ecological perception and the ecosomatic paradigm to "allow students to focus on their bodies not as objects to be trained, but rather as subjects of their world" (Shapiro 2002, 349). It also prioritises disseminating artistic research by expanding the work from a solo to an ensemble screendance.



Fragmented Scribbles (2022) From left to right: Ayanda Mshengu, Fezidingo Kibi, Zanoxolo Nkosi, Vuyo Ndawonde, Muhle Mahlangu and Sinenhlanhla Sihlangu. Visually documented by Smangaliso Ngwenya.

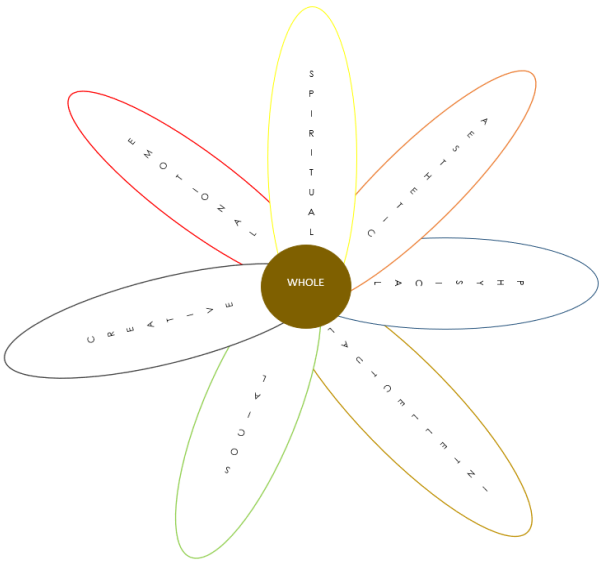


"Fragmented Scribbles" (2020). Visually documented by Smangaliso Ngwenya

Beginning the Scribble

"Fragmented Scribbles" (2020) was initiated during Covid-19 following an intensive period of lockdown in which I, holistically (see below the seven "petals" of a holistic being), had numerous embodied conversations, languages and events brewing inside me that could only be articulated through the language of movement, dance and physicality. It has now evolved into an ensemble work performed by six interns from the Forgotten Angle Collaborative Theatre (FATC).

FATC was founded in 1995 and has since evolved into one of South Africa's leading dance organisations based at the Ebhudlweni Arts Centre in rural Mpumalanga. It prioritises forgotten spaces, narratives, methodologies and wholistic beings as nodes, hubs and homes of greatness, according to the motto "From forgotten spaces, comes greatness." In the 27 years of its existence, FATC has collaborated with performers, choreographers, educators, performance



Diagrammatic representation of components contributing to the whole person and holistic artistic practice. Smangaliso Ngwenya conceptualised this diagram inspired by the natural shape of the flower. Here, all the petals meet to create the whole person.

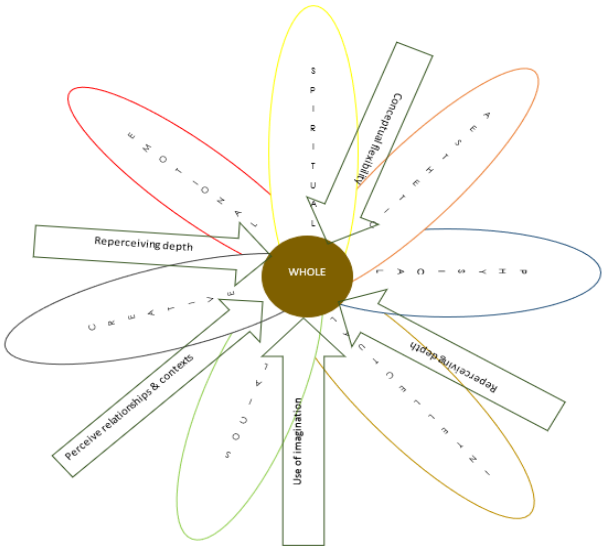
practitioners and creative sector allies to present probing, reflective, participant-focused performance, education, and training programmes nationally and internationally. Under the artistic directorship of founder P. J. Sabbagha, it has been a vehicle for social transformation, activism and sustainable growth, equipping individuals with 21st-century skills and bringing opportunities for social healing to communities.

The intention of "Fragmented Scribbles" in 2020 remains the same in 2022 – to bring to light/recover/recognise embodied scribbles of knowledge that exist in the endless conversations between the whole being and the ecologies it encounters. Conventionally and scientifically, ecology "directly refers to interrelationships – those of organisms and their environment. Specifically, it is the study of one's home" (Enghauser 2007, 81). The first home is the internal home of each intern – where the physical body shells the social, intellectual, spiritual, emotional, creative and aesthetic components of the whole being. Each intern had a unique ecology within themselves, which emerged in their movement vocabulary, site and interactions. The linearity of writing in a formalised, academic space sometimes diffracts and does not clearly articulate the true depth of artistic processes and research. Below is a collage of words that, alongside one another, attempt to provide a written description of this process that is an embodied experience:

> There is a fragment of something, someone, somewhere, somehow
> It exists here – there –
> In this organ
> In this spirit
> In this space
> To move
> To whisper
> To hum
> To disrupt the depths of a place unknown to you and me but the body, mind, soul, ecology, spirit and beyond.
> The living and breathing body, eco body and ecology knows
> In it, it homes a thought
> A nagging thought that develops into a catalyst expressed through and with the knowing body as an ecology.
> Utterances sometimes visit its expression – from a simple rhythm of breathing to the complexity of a shout/ scream that comes from a pitch and tone that resonate beyond your expectations and conscious manifestations.
> Placed in a vacuumed, focused moment of awareness – a distinct scribble writes, rewrites, curves, straightens, utters, stops, runs and spirals into pronounced fragments of scribbles embodied and projected through and with the eco-body.

"Fragmented Scribbles" prioritised the awareness of the ecology in the self and in relation to the Ebhudlweni Arts Centre, particularly its surrounding natural and agricultural ecologies. The Ebhudlweni Arts Centre is on a cattle and trout farm outside Machadodorp. "Fragmented Scribbles" prioritised this natural landscape and its features, such as a vast grassland, a forest of trees, two dams and a waterfall near the outskirts of the farm. Automatically, reconnecting self with the natural ecology ignited an awareness that "the advancement of industrial and technological cultures has separated us more and more from the earth and the free movement of our bodies. Most people today perform within a minimal range of the movements their bodies can do. This can cause gradual energy stagnation and loss of expression, vitality and awareness" (Hartley 1995, 304). This is where it became essential to unpack each intern's internal and physical ecologies or sites, revealing unique narratives and associ-

ations between the two ecologies (self and the natural ecology). First, the dancer/mover's body is their home as well as the destination and the vehicle for the navigation of self to "address others and the world, both in the art of dance and beyond" (Enghauser 2007, 81). Each performer thus registered this reconnection with self, as well as embracing a process that echoes Toni Morrison's "memory" through embodying the past and its manifestations, using "one's imaginative power to realise a latent, abiding connection to the past" (Rody 1995, 101). In addition, there is the refusal of structure and the concrete jungle, the embrace of water as an element of cleansing and reconnection, and certain interactions and experiences that cannot be articulated in words but only through the embodied process of each intern. Each site and reasoning will be elaborated in conjunction with unpacking the conceptual ecologies of this practice-led research.



The contributions of the ecological perception toward a holistic artistic practice and whole person

Unpacking Conceptual Ecologies

This practice-based research is affected and infected by a paradigm – the Ecosomatic Paradigm – that enfolds two methodologies: a dance technique by David Zambrano called Passing Through, and the FATC way, which prioritises participant-centred, learner-centred and experiential learning. Before delving into the ecosomatic paradigm, it is crucial to acknowledge Laura Sewall's ecological perception, which is the foundation of the ecosomatic paradigm. Ecological perception prioritises mindfulness over individualised and narrowed perceptions and experiences of self, and extends it towards conscientising the body to "sensuality, intimacy, and identification with the external world" (Sewall 1995, 204). In addition to Sööt and Viskus's notion of the whole being (2014), Sewall (1995) emphasises the role of mindfulness in perceiving the web of interrelations in the world that make up a whole ecology. There are five components of ecological perception (Enghauser 2007, 81):

1. Learning to attend – the holistic presence of each intern
2. Learning to perceive relationships, contexts and interfaces
3. Developing conceptual flexibility
4. Learning to re-perceive depth
5. Making intentional use of the imagination.

These components made up Sewall's proposition for debunking Western mind-body ideologies and opening one's perception to alternative ecologies around one's immediate body. She regrets the gap between humans and their environment and calls for a return to our essential animal selves (Sewall 1995, 203).

Sewall initiates her ecological perception by learning to attend, which speaks directly to each intern's total and mindful attendance in rehearsal and the Passing Through technical training process. Enghauser notes that mindfulness in dance is "when one's entire being is fully present both in dance class and in performance" (2007, 83). These notions of mindfulness and whole attendance will be further unpacked in the Passing Through section of this paper. Secondly, learning to perceive relationships, contexts, and interfaces manifested as immersing each intern in the process. This required some probing, to ascertain each of their relationships to one another, to the spaces they found themselves in during the Passing Through

technical training and, more importantly, to establish the awareness demanded by the process of transposing and improvising their solos at different sites. The process involved holistic investigation, using each site's ecological perception and each intern's somatic vocabulary (developed through workshopping and Passing Through). These made them more vigilant to the ecological components of their respective spaces, such as "the scale, size, location" and "topography of the site, whether it be an urban or landscape or architectural enclosure" (Serra 1989, ctd. in Kwon 2004, 12). They were learning to perceive ecologies so that each solo becomes part of the site that commands a restructuring of both the ecology of the body and that of the site "conceptually and perceptually" (Serra 1989, ctd. in Kwon 2004, 12). This process of site-specific solos required perceptual flexibility, which provoked imaginative thinking throughout the training in Passing Through and encouraged them to "vacate the norm and take on unfamiliar" methods (Enghauser 2007, 86) to achieve embodiment. Zanoxolo Nkosi (2022) shared her experience with the rehearsal process and her site:



Zanoxolo Nkosi is dancing on a wooden shed which contains all the agricultural equipment for FATCs organic farm. Visually documented by Smangaliso Ngwenya.

> Doing "Fragmented Scribbles" was great – I got to explore my body and experience other dancers doing the same, which was inspiring. I have learnt that something in your mind can help you choreograph something unique. The site in which you dance also tells a story.

Zanoxolo Nkosi chose a wooden shed which houses all the agricultural equipment for FATC's organic farm. When she started moving, there was an element of feeling confined by the industrialised structure placed on the vast natural landscape. Her interaction revealed frustration with the structure and resistance to conforming to its built and static nature, depicted in the curved, circular pathways she traced through the square structure. Her dance supersedes the structure of the building and attempts to reach beyond its confines.



Angel Mahlangu chose a dry, dusty forest site where she embodies and becomes her mother. Visually documented by Smangaliso Ngwenya.

Angel Mahlangu chose a forest-like site with trees which, for her, symbolised people who were surrounding her mother. The trees are family members, friends and bystanders who can see her mother's pain and struggles but cannot assist; only prayer can assist her mother. Mahlangu chose the site as she had always wanted to do traditional dance in a natural landscape. In Mahlangu's unpacking, all five components of ecological perception become evident.

Vuyo Ndawonde chose a dilapidated corrugated iron structure for its symbolism that resonated with his upbringing. He claims that it reminds him of the informal rural settlement he grew up in, surrounded by mud huts, noting that he "felt comfortable and accepted in that space," compared to that which the farm symbolises – wealth. In the site, a personal story and somatic response are revealed in how he uses gestures to ask questions.

Fezidingo Kibi and Sinenhlanhla Sihlangu's sites were mainly chosen to satisfy the spiritual aspect of their holistic being. Kibi stated that he had always been fascinated by cleansing himself in a river/waterfall, saying, "with that site, it was more of cleansing and developing a deeper understanding and relationship with

water spiritually" (Kibi 2023). Sihlangu chose her site because of her love for water. However, she also identifies the depth of the Ebhudlweni Arts Centre as a space to find herself and the journey of her ancestors. She identifies as spiritually gifted, wanting to utilise water to explore and understand her spiritual journey.

"I chose that site because it symbolises life generally from the green grass to the worn-out trees that are dry" (Tshabalala 2023). Ayanda Tshabalala particularly homed in on the polar ends of life in her site choice. At one end, one can be full of life or, at the other, a worn-out, dry, uprooted tree. Her solo plays between the poles of this dichotomy.

There are blurred boundaries in Sewall's five components of ecological perception, and there is a tangible weaving in the application of the ecological perspective on the ecosomatic paradigm. The remaining two components of ecological perception are reperceiving depth and the intentional use of the imagination. Enghauser (2007, 85) emphasises that "acknowledging the whole person within the dancer, as an ecosomatic view does, necessitates that self-body is uniquely constructed and of the world." Developing perceptual flexibility across spatial and temporal planes demands a constant flux, morphing and adjusting how we perceive ecologies.

This paper focuses on the somatic approach in respect of dance only. The somatic approach exists in dancing "when awareness, reflection, experiential investigation and even acknowledgement of feelings are engaged in a holistic context" (Eddy 2002, 119–127). In addition, "somatics is part of a larger paradigm characterised by emphasis on a whole system perspective, ecology, decentralisation of decision making, and a shift from outside authority to self-responsibility" (Fortin 2002, 134). The focus on the somatic also facilitates a re-perception of the wholeness of the human body/home/ecology as soma. It acknowledges the depths of interrelations in and around it. It is also an awareness of "how our bodies and somatic experiences are inscribed by the culture in which we live" (Green 2002, 114). Thus, our ecologies do not exist in isolation from others in the world: "bodily knowledge may be seen as the ways we understand ourselves and our environments through the body; it is also the ways we make meaning of the world through our bodily experiences" (Green 2002, 114). Lastly, being sensitive to the inner messages of the body and its states also affects the ability to re-perceive depth and apply the ecosomatic paradigm. The ecosomatic paradigm will be unpacked in the methodology section alongside a discussion of the Passing Through technique that prepared us all



Vuyo Ndawonde placed himself in a corrugated iron structure that symbolises informal settlements in South Africa. Visually documented by Smangaliso Ngwenya.



Fezidingo Kibi explores the spiritual significance of water. Visually documented by Smangaliso Ngwenya.



Sinenhlanhla Sihlangu immerses herself in the waterfall as a process of cleansing, reconnection and discovering her ancestral-spiritual path. Visually documented by Smangaliso Ngwenya.

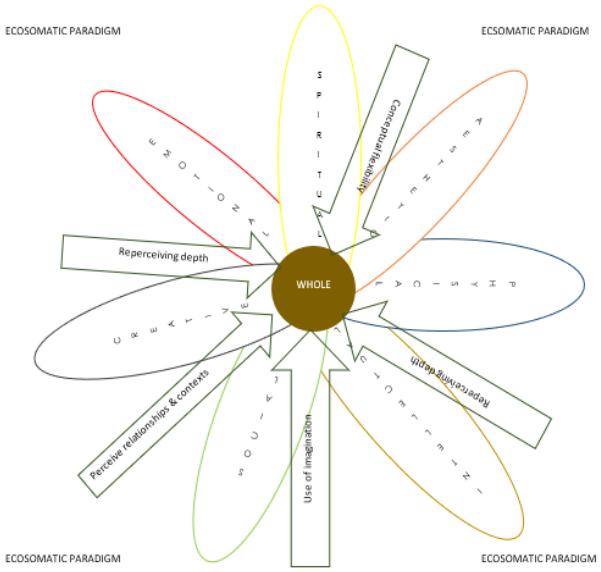


Ayanda Tshabalala improvises between the polar ends of green grass, worn-out grassland, and an uprooted tree. Visually documented by Smangaliso Ngwenya.

for the entire process. The values and characteristics of the preparation or training process required the exercising of ecological perception in the applications of the ecosomatic paradigm listed below (Enghauser 2007, 89):

- Sensing, from inside out, rather than relying on imitational practices
- Experiential modes of learning – authentic movement discovered through structured and guided improvisation
- Practices that acknowledge and apply a basic cognisance of the sociocultural construction of the body
- A balance of instructional approaches and philosophies, which includes a non-authoritarian, healthy learning environment that challenges each student
- Fostering the development of each student's creative, artistic voice in dance
- Creative problem-solving approaches in the learning of technical skills and concepts
- Recognising that the discipline of dance is an intrinsically motivated mindful practice that stems from empowerment and somatic authority
- A fervent nurturing of creativity and imagination.

Beyond the Pedestrian: Passing Through



The whole person/ ecology grows within the ground of the ecosomatic paradigm.

FATC has a specific approach to facilitating training and creativity, involving learner-centred, participant-centred and experiential learning. Experiential learning theory defines learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience" (Kolb 1984, 41). The organisation emphasises this mode of learning through doing and discovery, favouring exploration and engagement while ensuring individual growth in the participant. Participant-centred processes involve activation, motivation, stimulation and the provision of support. Activation is achieved by ensuring there is stimulating content, and motivation through creating a sense of belonging alert to the fact that "bodily experience is not neutral or value free; it is shaped by our backgrounds, experiences and sociocultural habits" (Green 2002, 118). Stimulation is supplied through creative and critical thinking development, and support for the participants is provided throughout. In combination, these elements establish a "non-authoritarian, healthy learning environment" (Enghauser 2007, 89).

The rehearsal/workshopping process was preceded by two weeks of technical training in the form of "Passing Through" classes facilitated by Nicholas Aphane. The Venezuelan dancer and choreographer David Zambrano developed this way of training for improvision. Zambrano has many methods of improvisation, but the most notable are the Flying Low technique which examines the dancer's relationship to the ground, and the Passing Through group composition, "exercising the practice of infinite possibilities of moving together inside a defined time-space environment" (Zambrano, 2015; *Flying Low and Passing Through* 2022). The latter uses the infinity of pathways created by bodies in and through space, enabling an awareness of depth beyond covering and occupying space. The technical training began with a simple question: "Do you know how to walk?" This prompt catalysed a heightened awareness of the interrelations between the ecologies of self, the group and the studio we found ourselves in. At first, frantically, everyone questioned whether they knew how to walk,

considering the leading prompt. This prompt immediately awakened a sociocultural awareness of the construction of the whole being. In conversation, Aphane recalls his experiences with Passing Through, particularly the pedestrian act of walking as a door into passing through in his first year while studying at P.A.R.T.S:

It became an exciting concept – it went against what I was previously exposed to in dance workshops. We walk every day, but we never practice walking. You begin to spot interesting habits or somatic responses in the group and get influenced by different stylised walks. It removes the immediate perception of walking as being a metronome.

The classes progressed into an "improvisation structure exploring the infinite possibilities of moving within a group in a set time-space" (Parts@work#2, 2023). In the process of improvisation "as a way of thinking and playing, and as a world view … lies a key to another way of being with one another, one that encourages spontaneity, challenge, discovery, and the expansion of creativity" (Kaplan 1995, 16, cited in Kuhlman 2004, 2). The room became filled with pathways, awareness, and a perception of depth, as infinite pathways passing through the walls, the floor, and even the different ecologies began to form. These pathways rise and descend in any direction and are filled with curves and spirals, large and small, resonating in spaces. The participants are enabled to adapt and locate themselves within different sites. The pathways became unpredictable scribbles, with human ecologies drawing them throughout the space. Zambrano was asked to reflect on the applications of structured and unstructured improvisation, and responded:

I like both [structured and unstructured improvisation] very much, depending on the circumstance and the day, because sometimes I go open and nothing happens. That's the risk of improvisation, and sometimes with a structure – you have the structure, nothing happens but you still have the structure, somehow the structure works. It's hard to say because there are magic moments when you feel you have control over all the forces. You have this direction, that direction of force; you have control over them, you feel very aligned with the space. You feel you know very well what's behind you or in front. Also you know the relationship of parts of your body through the centre, you find a game of interaction with each part and the space. When I find a game, when I find a playfulness, then it is happening, but when I feel I have to force it to make it happen, then it is hard, and sometimes that happens because…. It is hard to say, but it is really inspirational. Most of the time, I am very inspired, but when it does not happen, it is awful for me and for the audience. (David Zambrano, cited in Benoit 1995, 179)

The process of improvisation in Passing Through made evident the multiple components of the ecosomatic paradigm by facilitating each of our journeys of locating our individual creative, artistic presence through dance. This happened through the participants' constantly moving, making their environment their own and facilitating an awareness of one another and of the ensemble, activating their creativity, imagination, and problem-solving ability through manoeuvring and passing through one another. Perceiving relationships, contexts and interfaces prompted us to recognise that we were all highly integral to the somatic/movement/dance ecology. Passing Through resulted in a more profound emphasis on the interrelationship between different ecologies (internal and external) – the interns, myself, Nicholas Aphane and the different ecologies or "homes" in which we danced. The first home would be that of each whole body/ecology, consisting of the interrelationship between the ecology of self and the environment in which the holistic person has an embodied experience. In this context, the body as an ecology and home can be viewed as a whole ecology/ home/ person (these terms can be used interchangeably). One of the interns, Muhle Mahlangu (2022), gave insight into her process of Passing Through:

Passing Through made me realise I need to be more aware of other people and be able to protect myself from protecting others in space. In addition, I was unaware that

we could share energies as a group and be at the same understanding in space. The use of eye contact also contributed to my growth. Lastly, having agency and freedom to walk, run and stand without feeling confined to one temporal awareness. (Muhle Mahlangu 2022)



Fezidingo Kibi focused and immersed in a stance. Visually documented by Zanoxolo Nkosi.

Conclusion

I draw my inspiration from human behaviour, which includes pedestrian walks. As a creator, I look more in the now – at how we live as human beings and how nature connects to us. Using the pedestrian action of walking and from it advancing, dance became more about looking into self. It was not that hard, but it became challenging as a professional dancer, looking outside of myself and the technique. It was a matter of going into the basics – walking is something we see and do every day. It was much easier for me to continue advancing and creating from what we see. (Fezidingo Kibi 2022)

Through the movement of walking, we all perceived the depth of movement and the interrelations with self, interfaces and contexts (sites). The use of the pedestrian impacted us, helping us debunk and unlearn the "attitudes and habits that later impede [our] capacity of sensing, perceiving and changing" (Fortin 2002, 133). Fezidingo Kibi emphasises the importance of the sociocultural construction of the pedestrian and the "discipline of dance as intrinsically motivated mindful practice that stems from the empowerment and somatic authority" (Enghauser 2007, 89). The process of "Fragmented Scribbles" built on the pedestrian as a choreographic base, and through it, there were solos with an improvised ecological perception resulting from seeing the site as an (inter)textual space rather than just a source of spatial orientation (Kwon 2004, 29). Each site chosen by each intern provoked interactions and conversations with the imagination that reached beyond what was visible to the naked eye. In the collage of sites exists a place of cleansing; a space to converse with the textures and sounds of water; a shed of confinement; one of the structured dilapidated boundaries; a draught-filled, heavy, dusty, sandy pit and an open landscape to imprint thoughts upon in the breeze which passes through you and dances with you. The thorough application of ecological perception and the ecosomatic paradigm facilitated several nomadic narratives whose path was articulated by the passage of each of the interns (Kwon 2004, 29). There needs to be further investigation into the depth of conversations and collaborations between the two ecologies of the whole person and the site.

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ARTISTIC RESEARCH AND THE CITY SPACE: NEW ORIENTATIONS AND COLLABORATIONS

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This paper explores the evolving relationship between artistic research, architecture, and urban design in the context of shifting paradigms in the understanding of architecture and urban development. It highlights the transition from top-down planning to inclusive bottom-up processes and emphasises the importance of perceiving the city as a habitat rather than just a built environment. The historical precedents of artistic avant-garde movements, such as dérive and psychogeography, are examined, and their limitations in the contemporary context are discussed. The potential of artistic research to contribute to sustainability in ecological, economic, and societal dimensions is explored through various examples. Overall, the paper argues for the transformative power of artistic research in shaping future city spaces.

I

Increasingly, we are witnessing the slow beginnings of a tectonic shift in the understanding of architecture, urban research and design in the Global North and the Global South. As the first indications of this shift appear, urban development is moving away from top-down planning towards mediated bottom-up processes in which all the stakeholders in urban development can be involved. This is also a shift away from seeing the building as an isolated entity towards understanding it as a cell in the living tissue that is the city space. And most fundamentally, this sea change is leading us away from considering the city space primarily as a built environment, as a hard infrastructure, towards comprehending it as a habitat, taking into account the "soft infrastructure," the cultural lifeworld dimension with its orientations and identities that make the city work. Edgar Pieterse and AbdouMaliq Simone, urban researchers from South Africa, are looking into the ways in which societal lifeworlds and urban spaces are coded and re-coded in their entanglement (Pieterse and Simone 2017). Cristina Díaz Moreno and Efrén García Grinda from the Institute of Architecture at University of Applied Art Vienna, who have shown their work at several Venice Architecture Biennales from 2000 on, promote "a change of paradigm on architectural design practices, that could break the separation of our discipline and connect us back with societal problems and realities" (Díaz Moreno and García Grinda 2021). The Venice Architecture Biennale 2021 was dedicated to unpacking and negotiating the guiding question "How will we live together?" Architects and urban planners do not just conceive, design and build, says the Biennale's curator, Hashim Sarkis, but are first of all "convenors and custodians of the spatial contract" (Sarkis 2021). In this opening, curricula and work profiles in architecture as well as in urban design are changing, and artistic research in the full variety of its disciplines, from film to installation, performance and the sonic arts, can unfold its potential and make an impact on urban development processes. Emerging individual examples show that new and oftentimes experimental collaborations between artistic research, architecture and urban design are able to unfold novel ways to explore, understand, and map the city; to analyse the current ways in which we are producing space (Lefebvre 1974); to re-define existing buildings; and to project urban utopias, creating scenarios for future city spaces.

II

The idea that artistic research could enter into a dialogue with architecture and urban design and spur innovations in urban development is not completely new, since there are precedents for this kind of cooperation in history that we can reference, translate, and expand upon (cf. Winter 2023). One of the more distinctive examples emerged within the artistic avant-garde in post-war Paris, where – as elsewhere in Europe – various groups tried to build elements of a new culture as the old ways of living together had been discredited or destroyed. In 1953 Ivan Chtcheglov, a member of the Lettrist movement, walked a segment of Quartier Latin over and over again, developing what he called *dérive*, drifting through the body of the city, as a way to take note of the "atmosphere" of buildings, streets, and places. Chtcheglov saw the streets that he explored as if for the first time, and indeed the city space had not been seen in this way before. Guy Debord later wrote: "The sudden change of ambience in a street within the space of a few meters; the evident division of a city into zones of distinct psychic atmospheres [...] the appealing or repelling character of certain places – these phenomena all seem to be neglected. In any case they are never envisaged as depending on causes that can be uncovered by careful analysis" (Debord 1955). As Debord stated, *dérive* is a way of artistic research that yields a specific kind of knowledge, and yet is

not repeatable, since it leaves itself to the terrain and thus constellates itself time and again in different ways.

Exploring the atmosphere of sites leads to "mapping" the city in a whole new way. In *psychogeography*, the city space shows currents, vortexes, pivotal points and axes of passage, and is revealed to be subdivided into "unities of ambience." We can study the laws, Debord said, by which the built environment affects our ways to live and live together. The "hard infrastructure" is a manifestation of our current culture, and if we conceive a utopia of new cultural structures, new concepts to shape the city space will go along with them. A new architecture, Chtcheglov claimed, can express nothing less than a new conception of space, a new conception of time, and a new conception of behaviour (Chtcheglov 2006, 10).

The analytic endeavour of *dérive* was linked to a projective side on which the artistic research motion constantly sketched what could exist in place of what stands. All these new designs were developed from the background of the social utopia the situationist movement sketched. Their analysis of contemporary culture revealed what Debord called *the society of the spectacle* – a society in which the whole sphere of culture had become commodified. Instead of actively projecting their own existential ways and possibilities, people passively consumed figures of identification and images of ways to live that were produced and diffused by the mass media (Debord 1967). This *dispositif*, as Debord and the Situationist movement stated, perpetuated social injustice and engendered an isolate and frozen time. The Situationist counter draft aimed at a society in constant transformation, where citizens actively engage in creating "situations," or temporary settings for a shared collective time. Accordingly, the Situationist engagement turned against the functionalist architecture of the time, with its static and separated functions, and its eminently boring buildings, and opted for an architecture that could change its aspects and appearance, for spaces that have manifold meanings and are open to novel inscriptions. This built ambience would then set free other attitudes, perceptions and practices in a cohesive society in which heterogenous groups live together in mutual respect.

The Situationist approach, however, did not lead to any concrete cooperation with architecture and urban design. The only detailed concept of a new city space was *New Babylon*, the utopian city for a post-industrial society, developed by Constant Nieuwenhuijs. The many models and sketches by Constant did not translate into anything that was built, but they worked on the mindset of future architects and opened up new ways to think the city.

In retrospect, *dérive* and *psychogeography* show their historical limitations, corresponding to the times of the Situationist movement from the late 1950s to the early 1970s. As the context in which these artistic research approaches were developed, has changed, they cannot simply be continued, but rather need to be *translated* in order to work for contemporary city spaces. In this translation, *dérive* and *psychogeography* get enriched (see, e.g., Careri 2008; University of Johannesburg, Graduate School of Architecture 2018; Möntmann and Dziewior 2005; Richardson 2015; Stone-Johnson 2018, 2020). Use is made of new media such as film and video, and augmented, mixed and virtual reality (see, e.g., Elias 2010; Rascaroli 2015; Sylaiou et al. 2018), and the auditory dimension of the city space is explored (see, e.g., Chattopadhyay 2013, 2017, 2020a, 2020b, 2022).

III

In all these extended forms, and in many other ways that have been developed from the 1970s, artistic research can disclose the social, cultural, and economic structures of an urban habitat in their lifeworld dimension: that is, in a dimension between objective data as it occurs in scientific fields and a merely subjective experience. In its

various disciplines, artistic research helps us to understand the "soft infrastructure" of the city, the fine network of cultural habits, orientations, practices, and identities, which interlocks – or does not – with the "hard infrastructure," the buildings, the utilities and so forth. But artistic research is also devising future buildings, sites and city spaces intermeshed with societal projections and utopias that are way more complex than in former times. We see societies transform along multiple axes, in various dimensions that intersect and intertwine – for instance, in their knowledge cultures, in their economic structures, in their media landscape, and in their social fabric. We see linear transformation, but we also see breaks, leaps, and tipping points that open up unexpected opportunities, but also problems. In a stable context, a small impulse can change hardly anything, while in an unstable context, it can have a massive and structural impact. In short, we are operating in a complex system when we develop utopias that respond to our fundamental challenges.

Some of the collaborations between artistic research, architecture and urban design that are currently taking shape aim at ecological, economic and societal sustainability. And these dimensions cannot be advanced in isolation. We will not arrive at ecological sustainability as long as we live in a linear economic system that by its very structure requires a continuous depletion of resources. And we will not build a sustainable economy as long as we do not move towards a cohesive society, in which heterogeneous groups negotiate and re-negotiate their shares and commonalities in mutual respect.

Some concrete projects can serve as a guide to show the contribution that artistic research can bring to sustainability in its various dimensions. In its ecological dimension, *The Watershed*, a project by Lenore Manderson and Christo Doherty at Wits in 2018, opened up the question of how we deal with the element of water (Manderson and Doherty 2021). A great many scientific studies have highlighted that the way we deal with the environment urgently needs to be changed. But the corresponding transformation has not been achieved because the scientific insights have not connected with our lifeworld experience. As soon as a knowledge/action gap was identified, the efforts of science communication kicked in to visualize or to "sonify" the results of science in order to bring them to a larger public. However, this did not change the basic problem. *The Watershed*, in contrast, started from artistic research and thus opened a lifeworld dimension in which the element of water was considered in the depth of its meanings and the ways we deal with it. From there, the project could differentiate the problem into questions of water use and reuse, access, shortage and pollution, and, in turn, questions of what technological development can do, and what kind of political governance is needed to approach solutions to the water problem.

In recent years, we have seen many examples where cutting-edge tech development was prompted by artistic research, rather than the field of science. An example is the Kirigami Solar Cell, developed through cooperation between researchers from the School of Art & Design and the Department of Material Science & Engineering at the University of Michigan. Borrowing from the ancient Japanese art of paper cutting, an artist-researcher in the team came up with the idea of a solar cell that can split into tiny segments, which fold and spread apart to follow the sun over the sky. The engineers developed that cell, which is now available to produce 65% more energy than classic solar cells.

In the economic dimension, a circular economy tends to redefine buildings. In this process, artistic research in its site-specific forms can play a major role, as it can recollect the history of a space and open it up to future meanings. In this hinge function, the installation *Hansel and Gretel* – by Ai Weiwei, Pierre Herzog and Yves DeMeuron – fostered a re-coding of the Armory Show in New York, which had served as a military building for more than 150 years (Weiwei et al. 2018). This history was condensed into an overhead surveillance ambience with thermal cameras,

sensors, and drones. Marked areas on the floor invited people to hold poses for a while and to see their images appear and slowly recede into darkness. The visitors playfully experimented with their images and interacted with each other, and the building swung into its new function as a centre for the performing arts.

In the same vein, *The Coming Tide* by Ivor Houlker from 2013 explored an abandoned industrial area in London and dug through the layers of meaning of the site. Through a kind of archaeology, the waterways that were used to transport industrial goods are tracked back to their shamanistic layers of meaning, and in this commemoration the work prepares to re-code the area.

In the social dimension, the *Hotel Yeoville* project in Johannesburg shows how artistic research can induce societal cohesion (Kurgan 2013). In 2013, Terry Kurgan and a team of artists and architects researched the ways and habits of the people in Yeoville, a working-class suburb in Johannesburg where micro-communities of immigrants and refugees from other parts of the African continent live. In tune with their internet café culture, the project team built an interactive website, a virtual place of exchange, and corresponding to this, a real-space exhibition in a public library building offered a place where people could narrate their lives and their expectations. They could write or talk in storytelling booths, take photographs and do short videos. Presenting this material, the project encouraged and empowered people to realise their own voices. The result was a sense of common interests, belonging and mutual appreciation.

Theaster Gates gave another instance of community building when he transformed the abandoned Stony Island Bank in Chicago into a centre hosting exhibitions, archives & collections, research, artist residencies, and public programmes. It is a space for a predominantly black neighbourhood to access, reimagine and share their heritage – and a destination for artists, scholars, and curators; in short, a performative space in which a neighbourhood is able to identify itself.

In the current state of affairs, projects like these are isolated, distributed points, but they certainly have the potential to connect and in the long run form a wave of transformation. To remind ourselves that ways of exploring and designing buildings, sites, and city spaces also have a historical dimension, I return to the translations of *dérive*, for instance in a concrete building, the Musée des Confluences in Lyon, devised by Coop Himmelb(l)au. The museum is built in a place where the city fabric opens into nature, and it interacts precisely with this context. In its outside appearance and inside experience, it fulfils the Situationist demand for an architecture that is constantly changing. The built space is in itself dynamic – its identity is not fixed, it constantly reconstitutes the perception of its visitors, as if they are taking a walk through territory where their perspective is changing all the time. This complex porosity can only come to pass if differences, contradictions, breaks, and leaps are put to work to generate fluidity and transformation.

This brings us back to Ivan Chtcheglov and the motto in his legendary *Formulary for a New Urbanism*: *"Sire, je suis de l'autre pays* / Sire, I am from the other country" (Chtcheglov 2006, 7). This marks precisely the position of artistic research: on a cutting edge, in the moment and out of the moment, as the moment itself is out of joint, and is constantly leaving itself behind while renewing itself to be the next moment. In this movement, I am here, in this place that is familiar to me, and I am also elsewhere, at a slight distance of perspective, from which things start to look different. This sojourn on the edge gave Chtcheglov the opportunity to discover the world anew, time and again, beginning with a few streets in Quartier Latin. And indeed, what would be the alternative?

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FINDING MY VOICE THROUGH PRACTICE-BASED RESEARCH: A CRITICAL LOOK AT MY FILM SHATTERED REFLECTION

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This paper presents the author's exploration of memory and autoethnography in her film "Shattered Reflection." The author, an artistic researcher, delves into her personal experiences, lineage, and ancestral memories to answer research questions related to memory and its depiction in film. The paper reflects on the complexities of the author's identity and how this influences her approach to research. The paper focuses on using the self as a tool for answering research questions through remembering and autoethnography. The author explores topics such as accessing memory without archives, using film to depict fragmented memories, and uncovering invisible memory through visuals and sound. The paper also mentions the author's limited budget and her guerrilla filmmaking approach. The film is presented as part of a larger book project and is analyzed in the context of practice-based research.

I am an artistic researcher, academic, author and filmmaker who has always had a passion for storytelling. I like to wear all four hats simultaneously and I approach my work with a strong desire for understanding and authenticity when conducting research. In my search for legitimacy, I focus on the complexity of who I am to raise questions about how historical, personal and familial experiences can frame a research question and be utilised for practice-based research. In this paper, I consider how one can use the self to answer a research question through the act of remembering and autoethnography. I then find my own voice by analysing my film *Shattered Reflection* as a research method through four questions:

1. How does one trace and access memory that has no archive?
2. How does one use the self to trace the memory of things that we have not personally experienced but that exist somewhere in our collective or familial past?
3. How can one use the film medium to depict the fragmentation and inconsistency of the act of remembering?
4. How can we use visuals and sound to uncover invisible memory?

Considering Memory and How We Can 'Remember' through Structures

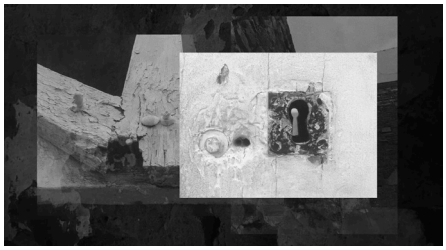


Figure 1: As I visit various locations I become increasingly conscious of the structures of each one. The memories they house are not obvious so I am reliant on a close examination of the cracks, splinters, chips and creases within structures. Somewhere beneath the layers lies the brick, the plaster or the coat of paint that witnessed the events I am trying to "remember." Structures become my eyewitness to the past.

I started to examine my past and how it influences my view of the world. I have always been interested in war and forced migration and I have written a lot about the representation of communities during times of conflict. This has been the centre and focus of all my research. I reached the point where I had to consider my own genetic complexity in relation to this ongoing interest. Both my parents were born in countries that no longer exist and migrated to South Africa, not by choice but because of political developments in Europe after World War II. Perhaps my continuing frustration at the unnecessary violence of war has something to do with transgenerational trauma around the forced migration associated with war and combat.

Being born in South Africa adds a further layer because the colonial and apartheid past makes me sceptical of all forms of power relations. My point of view is inevitably dictated by my social, political and personal experience of the past as a South African, and this has become central to how I approach my research. My sounding board is the field of memory studies because of its universality. Henry Roediger and James Wertsch (2008, 18) note that "because memory studies span so many disciplines, the methods used are quite diverse." My aim is therefore to find a method appropriate to my investigation that also enriches the methodology of enquiry. My focus is on the form and content of film and the act of remembering. How can I use a camera and the film medium to discover the invisible memories housed within space and place? How can I use how we navigate our surroundings to engage with their "memories" as a sounding board for interaction, critical reflection and deliberation? How can I use a camera to locate and access memories housed within sites for practice, research and story content?

Focusing on Autoethnography

My questions keep turning the camera and its gaze back to myself. I realise that to find any understanding of and authenticity in my project of enquiry I have to place myself

at the centre of the research question. I decide to treat myself as a lab rat by using a camera and film to access memories relating to my lineage. The aim is to establish a more critical understanding of who I am and how that influences my perception of the world. It is therefore inevitable that my research centres on autoethnography. I find autoethnography a solid method because it is not rigid and does not imagine or shape itself according to constraints of structure and form that one often finds with traditional research. Autoethnography "challenges canonical ways of doing research and representing others and treats research as a political, socially-just and socially-conscious act" (Ellis et al. 2011). While conventional practice-based research approaches "concentrate on an analysis of the process, design and production of the practice itself, autoethnography allows for this but also for the journey of the researcher during the research process to emerge" (Charleson 2019, 16).

I want the journey to be included so that my research and my practice and their outcomes are all taking place simultaneously. I want to wear all four hats at the same time so that I can experience a personal, emotional and intimate encounter with my research question. My approach is to speak to a theme through personal experience. This is not the conventional way to approach research, but those of you who know me a little will be familiar with the fact that I have not always approached my work according to dominant codes, conventions and expectations.

As I continue to witness the destruction of war and how it always leads to mass migration and displacement, I decide that this will constitute the core of my enquiry. As I look at the past and its memory through the architecture, buildings, monuments and memorials within my city of Johannesburg. I start to consider how their memory can emerge as a character within a story. The remnants of apartheid are still deeply entrenched in the architecture of our cities and homes. If walking through Johannesburg can jolt us into thinking about the historical, political and colonial past, then might we find memory in other features and structures in the landscape and cityscape? My starting point is memory and how we remember, but I want to consider how we might use a camera to uncover the ethereal, obscure and concealed memories that are housed within the chasms, the fissures and the ruptures. How can we move from conventional storytelling methods to find character and narrative content in location, landscape, architecture, buildings, streets, forests and nature?

I use the lacerations, grazes and bruises within structures to try and uncover memory, but I can also examine the outlines, contours and layout of a place to find out more about the past. In the film, I comment that "borders are the invisible lines that separate people, define them and keep them confined within their demarcated areas." My comment refers directly and critically to the politicians and administrators who draw those borders and lines. They are usually far removed from the traumas attendant on the circumstances that endowed them with authority. My film aims to move out of the rooms where decisions are made and to explore the effects of these decisions on actual people – through a focus on space and place.

Research through Practice

In order to achieve this, I look at key historical moments and discuss them through the real-life experiences of my great-grandparents, my grandparents, my parents and myself. The aim is to look at recorded history through the personal stories and memories of people who actually experienced them. History can give us the narrative of events through facts, but according to Winston Churchill "history is the story of the victors." Historical facts are inherently problematic because they are always one-sided and most certainly structured from the perspective of the conquerors. My method is to move beyond the frameworks that shape official history and examine

historical incidents through personal encounters. My research question considers how emotions and personal experiences tend to be universal in times of war, whichever side of the fence you are on.

My film *Shattered Reflection* is part of a larger book project *Uncovering Memory: Filming in South Africa, Germany, Poland and Bosnia/Herzegovina* (Sakota, 2023). The book is an interdisciplinary work that proposes innovative ways to approach pedagogy using sites of tormenting memories as the backdrop for practice-based research. In this paper I am discussing the film as a separate entity, but it is important to note that it is part of a much larger project that provides more detailed reading and interpretation concerning memory in relation to politics, history, culture and personal experience. Constraints of space also prevent me from discussing the film in its entirety. I offer a brief analysis of the film, placing it in the context of practice-based research.



Figure 2: The official poster for my film *Shattered Reflection*. The film traces my journey as I engage with fragments of memory across three generations. The visuals focus on objects of memory which are my pieces, shards and snippets of evidence of the past. The reflection of the sky in the river in the poster replicates my experiences as I look at the shattered reflection of my life.

Using Challenges and Limitations to Shape My Film

My budget is very limited and I rely on guerilla filmmaking as a method. This means that I film by myself with no pre-scripted narrative, no crew or additional equipment. The images are shot on location without reconnaissance, rehearsal or permits. As a filmmaker I make use of the resources that are available in terms of lighting, sound and narrative content. There is some archival footage, but apart from the S-VHS footage that was filmed in 1997 when I visited my father's village after the war that broke up the former Yugoslavia, the remainder of the film is shot using an iPhone-X with a small Rhode microphone attached to it.

As a filmmaker I like to view all film as simply film and I prefer to blur the boundary between factual and fictional filmmaking. The theoretical debates concerning the authenticity of documentary film have been exhaustive, from the first thinkers such as John Grierson (Hardy 1966) and Robert Flaherty (Griffith 1972), right through to Brian Winston (1995), Stella Bruzzi (2000) and Bill Nichols (2001). My concern is not with critiquing or finding a definition for documentary, but rather with thinking about how we can use a camera, considering the limitations imposed by frame, story and filmmaking, to engage more actively with the past.

The title *Shattered Reflection* refers to what is left when one experiences a traumatic event. The life you once knew is now shattered and the only evidence of what existed before lies in pieces on the floor. The world can never be what it once was and the only access to the memory of that life is through reflection on the broken and shattered bits that remain. As I interact with these memories through my camera I am looking at the reflection of those fragments, but as I look at them, I notice they are also looking back at me.

I exist at the centre of the film by looking at memories that form part of my collective or genealogical experience but that I haven't always experienced myself. I embrace my position in the clouded haze and no man's land I constantly seem to find myself in, where fact and fiction are constantly overlapping. It is obvious that in my search for memory and what is remembered, there will be a lot that is forgotten. The first two parts of the film focus on traumatic events caused by war through memories that were narrated to me. I use the actual buildings, cities, villages, places in nature and other sites that my parents inhabited as my vehicles of memory.

The only understanding of the event available is through the memory inhabited by the site itself. This leads to the question of how one engages with a setting and how its design and construction can be used as a conscious provocation. How does the architecture of a site generate memory and how is the past manifested in the architecture of memory?

As I have very few family photographs or documents, I decide that to access certain memories I have to go back to the core or origin of the event. This is how I start to engage with memory and the act of remembering. As I navigate each locale the memories start to emerge. I am in the present as my phone camera records my experience in actual time but in my head I am in the past 'remembering' and playing out scenes and experiences that are locked somewhere deep inside of me.

As I journey into the past by going back to the actual locations or milieux de mémoire I start to engage with memory. I must embrace the fact that there will be moments when I have to rely on fiction to connect certain dots. Autoethnography allows this flexibility because I will never find the truth or even a 'universal truth,' but rather my own personal understanding of the historic events or moments through the stories and memories.



Figure 3: The city space and architectural structures are my source of evidence and access point to memories of the past. I use visuals of the different places where events occurred, together with audio, to activate the memory and make what is unnoticed or concealed, recognised and apparent.

Finding My Voice through Practice-Based Research

Shattered Reflection is a collage of three encounters that are threaded together by the theme of death, forced migration and separation. The film reflects three different moments in time (World War II, the time after the war and the present). Memories come to us randomly and the act of remembering is as sporadic, abstract and irregular as memories themselves. The nature of how we remember is echoed in both the mood and tone of the film. According to Pierre Nora (1997),

> memory is alive, always carried by the living and in this respect, memory is in a permanent state of evolution. It is open to the influence of remembering and of amnesia, the unconsciousness of repeated distortions, vulnerable to all kinds of controls and manipulation, susceptible to long inactivity or sudden rekindling.

This uncertainty is reflected in the film's visuals, its narrative, the nature of the edit and the soundscape. The story moves between different plot points where time is random.

1. How does one trace and access memory that has no archive?

Nora (1989) has written extensively on memory in relation to places and spaces. He makes a distinction between places of memory, which he identifies as *milieux de mémoire*, and the sites or objects of memory, which he identifies as *lieux de mémoire*. For Nora (1989, 7) *milieux de mémoire* are the true sites or environments of memory because they are the actual places where events have taken place. In contrast, *lieux de mémoire* are created as representations of memory because it is not always possible to access the original place of memory. They are artificial sites that have been created to remember because the place or world of the memory no longer exists.

I need to go back to the source of memory or the *milieux de mémoire* and revisit the memory of the past through buildings, landscapes and city spaces. I cannot anticipate how I will react in each location, and this is part of the beauty of practice-based research. I also do not have a script so I am completely reliant on my interaction with and experience of each place to mould, structure and shape my narrative. As I walk through, I think about the memories. As I look around, I realise that the buildings, streets, trees and streams are my eyewitnesses, that somewhere behind their façades lie the layers that witnessed the memories I am trying to remember. They are no longer static objects: they are firm and solid but they are also alive with memory.

My archive comprises the places and surroundings my parents inhabited. These become my objects of memory. As I walk through the various buildings, streets and locations I record what I see. The photographs, images and sounds as well as the film itself form part of my memory box.

2. How does one use the self to trace the memory of things that we have not personally experienced but that exist somewhere in our collective or familial past?

The train features at numerous points in the film. It plays a prominent role in my story. I see the train as the perpetual perpetrator because it has transported victims, dictators, leaders, soldiers and refugees throughout narratives of war. My interaction with the past forces me to confront my memories and experiences of the torment of the historical past as well as my personal interaction with traumatic memory. As I walk with my camera I consider the footprints of those who walked before me. I consider the fate of those who challenged societal structures and as I acknowledge their fate I realise I too am haunted by their experiences and stories.

Marianne Hirsch (2012, 5–6) uses the term "postmemory" to mean an "uneasy oscillation between continuity and rupture." For Hirsch, "postmemory is not a movement, method, or idea," but rather "a *structure* [original emphasis] of inter- and transgenerational return of traumatic knowledge and embodied experience. It is a *consequence* [original emphasis] of traumatic recall but (unlike post-traumatic stress disorder) at a generational remove' (6). In other words, postmemory is looking at the past across generations. Hirsch's research focuses on the trauma of the Shoah as seen through family archives and photographs, but her approach is relevant to how the second generation can look at history through the experiences of their parents.

The film is shaped by different narrative styles. Part 1: Departure takes the shape of a poem and remembers May 1945. I narrate the poem because in essence I am trying to remember the actual moment during WW II when my great-grandparents, grandparents and my mother had to leave their home because it was getting too dangerous to stay. The Soviets were already taking over the city. In this section, I am writing about their memories but through my own emotional experience of the space and what I imagine it must have felt like, not only for them but also for everyone else who is displaced by war.

My reference to the man who takes his last breath is my great-grandfather, who dies from a heart attack in May, 1945. My uncles – who at that time were only 14 and 16 years old – bury him in the park opposite the apartment. I return with the map they drew and walk through, trying to find the spot where they buried him so long ago. My inclusion of my great-grandfather's burial in the park reminds me of the universality of this act during war. How many times in history have we seen parks and stadiums being converted into makeshift gravesites, sometimes only to be bulldozed afterwards, thereby eradicating the memory and evidence of the violence that came before.

3. How can one use the film medium to depict the fragmentation and inconsistency of the act of remembering?

Part 2: Fragmented Harmony is structured around the masked interview. Here I take snippets from both my parents who explain what life was like just after the war. This part of the film remembers a time of peace when people were rebuilding their lives. The world is trying to find peace and normality despite having experienced the traumas and horrors of war. I refer to this time as fragmented harmony because the traumas of the past remain forever embedded deep within us. The memories will always linger in our minds. The audio is also interspersed with comments taken from one of the workshops discussed in my book. Again, I present numerous voices

to remind us how human suffering is constant, inevitable and universal in war.

In this part of the film I move in and out of various moments in time that shaped my existence: the town of Weißenfels in Germany where my mother was relocated after WW II, my father's village Kozice in Bosnia/Herzegovina, left in ruins after the war that broke up the former Yugoslavia, the Berlin Wall that divided Europe into East and West. The film then moves to my mother's voice narrating a happier memory as a child growing up after the war. She talks about swimming with her father across the river to an island to pick apples. Her voice is distinctly different at this moment in the film as she narrates the story. Here I use visual re-enactment as I go back to the river in Weißenfels and film my interpretation of how they collected the apples. Again, the narrative is sporadic because the montage of the visuals and phrases is as random as the memory itself.



Figure 4: As I walk through Berlin I am always conscious of where The Wall once stood. As I stand on the edge I contemplate how people's lives were shaped and affected, depending on which side of the wall they were standing.

There is no tangible evidence of the events I am remembering within each locale and I am reliant upon finding my evidence and eyewitness within the fabric of the architecture, setting and environment. The walls, the floors, the cobble and the streets are both a source of memory and a gallery of spectators who watch me as I am trying to reveal the memories locked somewhere in the fabric of their being.

4. How can we use visuals and sound to uncover invisible memory?

Part 3: Mosaic brings my own memories and experiences into the narrative. I consider how I have seen separation, segregation and mass displacement in my family and in my city Johannesburg. At this point in the narrative I bring to bear my understanding of how to find memory within the contexts of space and place. I start with a sequence of beautiful images taken from nature, snow falling softly in a landscape, different forests, images of trees and bark, water and swans. These are my natural locations of memory. I walk through them, captivated by their beauty and splendour but also harshly reminded of the atrocities they have witnessed – mass migration, executions and death.

I am not the first to turn to objects to uncover hidden memory. Dutch artist Armando reflects a similar approach in his exhibition *Guilty Landscapes*. His work is both "tentative and ambiguous" (Spaul and Wilbert 2017, 86), reflecting his experience as a young boy living near the Nazi concentration camp Amersfoort. For Armando, nature shares the perpetrator's guilt as it stands and watches. According to Martin Spaul and Chris Wilbert (2017, 86) Armando captures "the kind of guilt that attaches to landscape – now silent, flourishing and beautiful – that has witnessed terrible events in the past." For Ernst van Alphen (1997, 128), "the meaning is produced not by metaphors concerning the imperturbable perpetrator, but by the traces of the violence that occurred at that particular place." My attitude towards my objects of memory is a little more complex, somewhat ambivalent and tainted with uncertainty. Although I look at them with some defiance, I have to be cautious and amicable because they are my only existing eyewitnesses, bystanders but also observers of events. It is with this strange and complex relationship with my memory objects that I approach my journey.

As this section focuses on me, the images are taken from my entire journey as I incorporate images that 'remember' my generational past as well as images from the city of my birth, Johannesburg. At this point in the film, I ponder with each step I take how the city was once segregated. As I walk the streets, I remember those who came before me and consider their experience within each domain but from a different moment in time. I come back to the concept and image of the train because it plays such an important role. Johannesburg is a mining city and the train has always

been the central mechanism feeding the greed for gold above and below the ground. The train is a symbol of colonisation – we remember Rhodes's vision of a railway line linking Cape Town to Cairo – and a metaphor for apartheid as it transported labourers and workers from segregated areas into the city.

I walk around the city, searching for evidence by which to remember those who dared to transgress and move beyond the borders, boundaries and barricades. I remember people I have known as well as those whom I have never met who walked the same pathways.



Figure 5: Nature is my guilty landscape as she remains bold, beautiful, alluring and serene, yet my relationship with her is ambiguous, enticing, hesitant and uncertain. The edit throughout the film is layered with overlapping images as a visual reminder of the different threads of memory.

The beginning and the end of the film are framed by the image of waves gently making their way onto a beach. The close-up of the ebb and flow of the waves symbolises my own experience of traumatic memory and loss that, just like the waves, never goes away completely. At one moment grief overwhelms you, only to retreat again the next moment. The cycle never ends because although the feeling of grief subsides, it will always return, just like the ebb and flow of the sea. As I remember the events of my own life I realise I am not alone, that this story is universal because, as I say at the end of the film, "we each have a story, a reflection, a mosaic, a collage not only of ourselves but also of those who were before us."

Wrapping up

To conclude, throughout my journey I place myself and my experiences, interpretations and perceptions at the centre of my practice-based research. Historical, personal and familial experiences frame my research questions through the act of 'remembering' and autoethnography. This is a process that uses story to bring research to life (Charleson, 2019, 15), where the gaze is reflected back on the self, forcing one to engage with the world from a unique position. My evidence oscillates between actual memory and mediated recall of events that I have not directly experienced. My filmmaking method is simple and the camera and film medium become my voice and the instrument of my search to unveil invisible memory hidden within space and place. Personal contact and involvement, family lineage and political histories intersect to form an interwoven, multi-faceted and unstable understanding of the past. As I remove all four hats that examine, investigate, enquire and reflect I realise there are no answers, only questions that raise more questions.

To view the film online:
https://www.youtube.com/@uncoveringmemory
Click Part III: *Shattered Reflection*

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CULTURAL INTEGRATION FOR STATE IDENTITY IN NASARAWA STATE'S CHOREOGRAPHIC APPROACH TO NAFEST "DANCETURGY"

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This paper discusses the concept of "danceturgy" and its role in the National Festival of Arts and Culture (NAFEST) in Nigeria. NAFEST aims to promote national unity and identity through the performance of Nigerian cultural heritage. The guidelines for participation in the festival emphasize the reflection of cultural peculiarities and the use of authentic dance stories. The danceturgy at NAFEST involves stage and DVD presentations, with specific criteria for judging. The text highlights the creative process of the Nasarawa State Performing Troupe (NSPT) in developing their dance entry for NAFEST 2009, including the study of the festival syllabus, conception of the story idea, assembling choreographic devices, rehearsals, and the final performance. It is suggested that the NSPT choreographic approach be adopted and modified to suit NAFEST danceturgy

Introduction

The multi-ethnic composition of Nigeria's population is overwhelming,[1] and managing ethnic and cultural diversity to attain national integration and unity has always been a focus of interest in the country (Edewor et al. 2014). The sheer fact of Nigeria's ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity led to the conception of the National Festival of Arts and Culture (NAFEST) in 1970. NAFEST has the specific purpose of advancing national unity and identity through performance of the variegated aspects of the Nigerian cultural heritage. Consequently, the danceturgy of the festival is structured to promote this ideology, while its form and structure occur within "the cultural confines of the (Nigerian) State space" (Tume 2021a, 124). Artistes from the 36 states of Nigeria and the Abuja Federal Capital Territory (F.C.T.) are the main participants in the festival, obliged to key into the NAFEST ideology with their creativity (Tume 2021b).

The concept of danceturgy encapsulates the arrangement of the entire structure of any dance story. It is an adhesion of the bits and pieces of all the components which go into the theory and practice of dance choreography as a creative art. It is a form of storytelling through dance that unpacks, in choreographic terms, the socio-cultural interactions of human beings in everyday life. Danceturgy pays detailed attention to a dance story from diverse perspectives while also ensuring its accuracy in terms of setting, costumes, period, and movement vocabulary. The main features of danceturgy answer the 'why,' 'how,' and 'what' questions about dance as follows:

i. The concept – the main idea behind a dance story and what it seeks to achieve.
ii. The process – the method and approach deployed to generate the dance story.
iii. The product – the form and content of the dance story for meaning production.

The dance event at NAFEST is usually competitive, with the guidelines for participation clearly spelt out. As the pattern of the dance events of the festival evolved over the years, a well-defined structure of NAFEST danceturgy became evident. The form and structure of NAFEST danceturgy are informed by the guidelines for participation and the criteria for adjudicating the event over several years. NAFEST 2009 thus had the following guidelines for participation in the dance events:

- All entries must be original and reflective of the cultural peculiarities of the given State and F.C.T.
- Participating States and the F.C.T. are advised to research their cultural milieu to unearth relevant occupational traditional dance and music.
- The number of persons on stage at a particular time should not be more than sixteen persons excluding the instrumentalists.
- The duration for each performance should be between ten minutes minimum, and fifteen minutes maximum.
- The Festival Committee shall provide only a bare illuminated stage. States are therefore expected to construct appropriate props as well as provide costumes to reflect the background and mood of their dance. (NAFEST Handbook 2009, 26)

In recent years, NAFEST danceturgy has been split into two components, Stage Presentation and DVD Presentation. The Stage Presentation accounts for sixty per cent (60%) of the scores, and the DVD Presentation forty per cent (40%). Apart from live presentation of entries at the festival, participating states are expected to submit a ten-minute promotional documentary in DVD format of the dance earmarked for stage presentation. The adjudication criteria for the stage performance are listed as follows: originality, thematic relevance, creativity in content and presentation, choreography, instrumentation, stagecraft and design, stage management, showman-

ship/audience appeal, adherence to time, and costumes and make-up. The criteria for the DVD are scripting/narration, packaging/presentation/title/captions, picture resolution, audio-visual effects, and timing. The entries are judged by seasoned dance scholars and practitioners convened by the festival organisers every year.

The strict guidelines for NAFEST danceturgy emerged in the late 1990s when it became obvious that dances at NAFEST were mainly reflective of the dominant ethnic groups in each state. NAFEST organisers moved to discourage this because it resulted in the under-representation of minority groups and undermined the aim of the festival. NAFEST danceturgy encourages the dance theatre form, the telling of authentic stories featuring cultural dances that have evolved from the traditional festival arena to the contemporary stage or performance space. Dances performed at NAFEST can thus be considered modern or contemporary versions of their original traditional forms. The use of dance in this manner imbues it with the ability to treat topical issues, through the exploration of suitable multi-ethnic dance materials for holistic communication.



Figure 1: The Nasarawa State contingent celebrating with the Golden Gong prize, as the overall winner of NAFEST 2009, held at Minna, Niger State, Nigeria. Source: Researcher.

Nasarawa state has 30 ethnic groups and about 40 languages and dialects, and has therefore earned the apposite nickname "Mini Nigeria" (Tume 2019; Iyimoga 2011, 15). Since its inception in 1996, the Nasarawa State Performing Troupe (NSPT) has been an active participant in NAFEST. The troupe is administered by the Director of Arts and Culture, Head of the Performing Arts department, and Cultural Officers who are full-time employees of the state government. However, from time to time the Nasarawa State government engages the services of Artistic Consultants on an ad-hoc basis to carry out capacity building workshops for the troupe members and prepare them for competitions at festivals and carnivals. These Artistic Consultants range from academics to seasoned professionals and scholar-artistes. The consultants take members of the troupe through a series of theoretical and practical exercises to enrich their knowledge and hone their skills. Mallam Mohammed Egye, the Troupe Director from 1996 to 2018, elaborates thus:

> As far as NAFEST is concerned, the job is not for only the staff of the Arts Council. Every indigene of the State who is an artiste, wherever they may be, come back home for NAFEST. We also engage non-indigenes in the artistic field. That is the secret of our success; we do not depend on the members of the troupe alone for national or international festivals or competitions. Our success is as a result of sustained collaborative efforts. (Egye 2017)

Before participating in any festival, members of the Nasarawa State contingent are usually lodged in an artiste camp, far away from their homes. The camp period may last from two to four weeks, depending on the magnitude of the project involved. This is to encourage total concentration on the task ahead. At the artiste camp, dieticians and special cooks are engaged to ensure strict adherence to healthy diets fit for performers. Health workers are on standby to attend to any health hazards which may arise. The troupe also extends invitations to independent performers and private troupes in the various local governments of the state. The presence of all these people in the artiste camp fosters a balanced representation of the cultural stakeholders and good synergy for the project.

The Creative Process of *Bla Mbo* (2009)

Between the years 2007 and 2011, NSPT won the Best Overall State at NAFEST, a record yet to be broken. This indicates that Nasarawa State adhered to the stipulations

of the festival curriculum during those years. Naturally, there has been curiosity about what NSPT did, and how, to get things right at NAFEST. This segment of the article highlights the creative process of *Bla Mbo* which was the NPST dance entry at NAFEST 2009. The process of creating *Bla Mbo* is set out in the sections that follow.

In-Depth Study of the NAFEST Syllabus

The overall theme for NAFEST 2009 was "Culture and the Challenges of Our Time: Cultural Industries and Wealth Creation," while the competitive dance event was anchored by the theme of Occupational Indigenous Music and Dance. In line with the features of NAFEST danceturgy, the 2009 festival syllabus also placed a premium on thematic relevance, state identity, cultural integration, dance theatre form, limited cast, and short timeframe. To tackle the task, the team of consultants initially brainstormed the theme and agreed on the best way to interpret it in dance. For the *Bla Mbo* project, the team of consultants that worked with the troupe included Dr Chris Iyimoga, Prof Emman Dandaura, Prof Victor Dugga, Prof Musa Enna, Dr Reuben Embu, and Dr Arnold Udoka. Dr Udoka, a dance specialist who was Director of Dance at the National Troupe of Nigeria (NTN) at the time, led the choreographic team that produced *Bla Mbo* as the NSPT dance entry for NAFEST in 2009. Professor Dandaura, leader of the consultation team, had said that "with regard to our work as a consortium we are deliberate because we know that our duty is to represent the state; when there is an issue, we scan round to see which best expresses that particular issue" (Dandaura 2017). To create *Bla Mbo*, critical research was therefore conducted on the traditional occupational dances within the state while paying attention to their "traditional canons, body value, and significance to their host culture" (Udoka 2017).

Conception of the Story Idea

After a thorough study of the festival theme, the choreographer, Dr Arnold Udoka, generated a story idea to interpret it. More research was subsequently conducted into appropriate cultural materials to suit the story, and with the support of other members of the team, a decision was made on the best means, methods and materials to push the story. According to the choreographer:

> The theme inspired me to create. I also delved into my training in modern dance. Not contemporary dance, mind my choice of word; modern dance to create natural and abstracted movements. Because choreography is an art, you must have the ability to create movements that people can interpret in respect to their languages. (Udoka 2017)

In creating *Bla Mbo*, Udoka claims that he generated an allegory identifying a problem common to communities in Nasarawa State. Thus, the *Bla Mbo* tale is told with a plausible solution in the storyline.

Assembling the Choreographic Devices

Once the story was set, the team moved on to assemblage of the research results, with the aim of implementing them in performance. The appropriate movements and musical materials for each fragment of the story were identified. The dance was created in a workshop manner, whereby dance movements, music, songs, chants, props, make-up and costume ideas were sourced from artistes from different ethnic groups, until "the performance for all Nasarawa [was] achieved" (Egye 2017). Bearing in mind the NAFEST ideology, NSPT ensured that the dance piece reflected all the ethnic groups "either by way of costume, music, movements or props" (Egye 2017). Mrs Glorie Ashikeni, Head of the Performing Art department at the time, corrob-

orated this by noting that "whatever we cannot achieve with the movements, we supplement with the representation of costumes, songs, music, chants, props etc. Our dances are total theatre performances which are full of symbolic clues" (Ashikeni 2017). With this approach, the ethnic identity of the product is no less than that of the entire state.

Rehearsals, Modification and Preview

What started as an imaginary story was later woven into dance to show how the ethnic groups within Nasarawa State interrelate, while obeying the individual dance canons of the ethnic groups and giving them authentic representation. The choreographer took artistic initiative to deconstruct existing movements, make realistic improvisations, and synthesise the dance with the story idea. After the arrangement and rearrangement of the choreographic devices and their incorporation into the plot, the result was cleaned up during several rehearsal sessions, after which it was presented to the team of consultants for feedback.

The Product: *Bla Mbo* in Performance at NAFEST 2009

The piece starts with a group of women wearing Mada costumes gathered to carry out a cleansing and healing ritual to seek intervention from the gods, as hunger and starvation ravage the land. They enact the Arizeni healing ritual of the Alago people, as they march across the stage with feet-flicking movements in a slant floor pattern. Holding one another by the elbow, the women grunt rhythmically as they move elbow to elbow and foot to foot, while they count two-two steps forward on each movement and swing their bodies. They chant:

Mada chant:

Yah'lo yah yeka oh oh oh oh oh oh
Ywen gig yen nge – yah yekao
Mei mei sei ye dwoh, mei mei touh ye rhon
Oh rhina kaya rhe chun-oya
Nzar nge nche gyun nge ma nzwe gye ma-yalo

English Translation:

Oh my mother, my mother is no more
Oh my siblings, our mother has deserted us
The land is vast for us to farm, but the land is not fertile for farming
We must resolve to unite and work hard like in the days of King Kaya
If you have a hoe to farm, come with me

As the women march around the village in tears, they display empty pots to signify hunger. They fetch and throw sand in the air to illustrate the infertile soil. They wail:

Mada song:

Oh Nigeria ghou, oh Nasarawa gou!
Nfeh la the te'ma, gye ama nye te'gi su larin
Tih tih te sei she no ba ma
Doglo da lah te' ma
Mei mei kain ye te'ne dwoh

Da ma reh lah
Mmh! Mmh!! Mmh!!! Mmh!!!!
Mmh! Mmh!! Mmh!!! Mmh!!!!

English Transliteration:

Hear me, oh Nigeria, oh Nasarawa!
We are hungry in the midst of abundance
Are we going to fold our arms and pine away in penury?
Let us come together and cry to our ancestors for help
Let us harness the abundant resources in our land
Only then can development be assured
Yes, yes yes, oh yes, I agree!

The wailings of the women invoke the ancestral spirits/masquerades, and they come out in the form of the Odu masquerades of the Alago people to cleanse and appease mother earth. They perform several Gwandara Owa dance movements and squatting, jerking, and spinning acrobatic stunts. To signify an answer to the prayers of the people, the rains return, and two maidens wearing purple and yellow Koro costumes execute the body-vibrating Mighili movements as they revel in the refreshing showers. They sing:

Mighili song:

Evule eve kene yi – Evu evu
Evuve no nanu ze ku
Mona zapape tamiri
Anole kariye manila
Dogu pete gariye konye ha
Apyota nya iza shamayi tatata

English Translation:

Evu my mother said – Evu said
Evu said when I die
Place pawpaw on my grave
Let not Anon bird eat my grain because I'm poor
Let Anon bird eat the corn of the rich

Seizing the advantage of the rain and the refreshed soil, the people of the land intensify their hard work and determination to achieve economic success. Male dancers wearing the full Eggon hunters' costumes of shredded wine and white coloured skirts, and baboon-skin headgear, come on stage. They are also armed with their hunting bags, bows and arrows in readiness for a rewarding hunting expedition. They execute the Eggon movements to Gwandara music, while enacting how they hunt for game in the forest. The farmers also till the land, employing natural movements to detail the various activities involved in agriculture, such as land clearing, ridge-building, planting, weeding, and harvesting. They dance and sing:

Gwandara song:

Insubula ya lesa ba
Insubula inma su samu

English Translation:

He who works doesn't lack
He who seeks will surely find

Gbagyi song:

Shokola ga Nigeria kuma
Shokola ga Nigeria kuma
Shokola ga Nyazigayi kuma
Yonkum yibwa agiwe

English Translation:

God gave us Nigeria
God gave Nasarawa to us
God has blessed our land with different types of food
Come, let us work hard so we can celebrate

The benny-seed farmers who sport the white, blue, and wine-coloured traditional Afo costumes come on stage to cultivate their farmland. They execute the feet-shuffling Gbagyi Kabulu and the hand-fanning Bassa dance movements, while singing:

Gwandara song:

Yalo fa ya leyi ashama – Yamwa
Shama ne kanu gbe jhi yagi
Yalo fa ya leyi whan gada
Gada ne konu gbe jhin yagi

English Translation:

Come let us go cultivate yam, our main food crop
Yam, our food for growth and development
Come let us go and hunt animals in the bush
Hunting gives us food for growth and development

The bee farmers also dance in, wearing traditional woven garments in the Nasarawa colours. While executing the Owa dance movements, they drop benny seeds into their pots to attract bees. They dance out, and upon their return, they bring pots with which they scoop up the honey residue from the bees.

Following the resolute hard work of members of the community, fertility is restored to mother earth. The hunters find their quarry, the calabashes of the bee farmers brim with honey, and the benny-seed farmers harvest bountifully. During the celebration of the bumper harvest, members of the community present food crops and hunting games to the gods in appreciation, while refined processed goods such as shoes, belts, hats, and bottled honey, are packaged for barter and export trade. At this point, the farmers and hunters troop in, variously dancing in Gwandara, Afo, Odu, and Eggon movements to Gwandara music. As the festival peaks with the diverse cultural dances, the ancestral spirits show up, and humans and spirits become one in the dance of celebration.

Evidence of NAFEST Danceturgy Principles in *Bla Mbo*

Dance Theatre Form

Bla Mbo conforms to the tenets of the dance theatre form, as it narrates an entire story using the medium of dance. It tells the story of a land laid waste by famine as a result of drought. It illustrates the decisive actions that the people take to rescue their land from hunger and starvation, and it showcases the dynamics of the phases in a variety of occupations, with their challenges and prospects. It also demonstrates the gains to be made through the positive commitment and activity of the people.



Figure 2a. The ancestral spirits on a rescue mission to cleanse and restore the land. Source: Researcher.

Thematic relevance

The idea for *Bla Mbo* derives from the Ninzom phrase *Bla Mbo*, which means "End of poverty." The piece is an amalgam of the various occupational dances found among the different ethnic groups in the state. The occupational dances are woven around a story that details the transition from poverty to economic freedom. In so doing, the dance piece addresses the festival theme of "Culture and the Challenges of Our Time: Cultural Industries and Wealth Creation."



Figure 2b. The benny-seed farmers sifting the chaff off their farm produce. Source: Researcher.

State Identity

Bla Mbo thrives on the use of ethnographic aesthetics for cultural integration. The exploration of the diverse Nasarawa ethnic music and occupational dances in a single dance piece suggests and promotes an inclusive state identity. The NSPT choreographic model features the deft use of creative concepts, body movements, multi-rhythmic floor patterns, costume and make-up, music and instrumentation ensemble, cultural nuances and contexts, and props. All of these choreographic devices were sourced across the various ethnic groups in the state and deployed to build a state identity in the performance.



Figure 2c: The hunters hunting for game in the forest. Source: Researcher.

Limited Cast

The cast for the performance of *Bla Mbo* at NAFEST on 26th October, 2009, in Minna, Niger State, was as follows:

Wailing women:
Safaratu Amfani, Esther Inji, Charity Asegba, Elizabeth Akombo, Asabe Barki (deceased), Victoria Dalyop

Ancestral spirits:
David Tume, Agbo Abe (deceased), Adeka Mu'azu, Ado Adanu, Cletus Peter, John Tagwai, Auwal Ahmed, Babangida Onpoku, Dantani Magaji, Ode Baba

Mighili maidens:
Peace Elisha, Racheal Solomon

Hunters:
Silas Adagba, Ali Yakubu, Solomon Njigha, Salisu Ali

Bee farmers:
David Tume, Cletus Peter, Agbo Abe, Adeka Mu'azu, John Tagwai, Esther Inji, Victoria Dalyop, Elizabeth Akombo, Charity Asegba, Safaratu Amfani

Benny seed farmers:
Silas Adagba, Ali Yakubu, Solomon Njigha, Salisu Ali

Instrumentalists:
Peter Tatari, Ojukwu Adi, Abdulahi Abari, Tivlumun Antsa, Terseer Lijam, Haruna Sarki, Danjuma Baji, Timothy Bawa

To adhere to the sixteen-strong cast (excluding instrumentalists) criterion of the festival, some performers were made to play multiple roles in the performance.

Short timeframe

Bla Mbo in performance lasted for fourteen minutes, including the set-up and strike time. With that timing, the piece met the fifteen-minute maximum duration stipulated in the festival syllabus.

Conclusion

With its ideology and policies, NAFEST commits to uniting Nigeria through cultural performance. Its danceturgy is determined by the festival objectives, criteria of adjudication and guidelines for participation, and strongly informed by the themes of cultural integration and statehood that are at the crux of the festival philosophy. A review of the NAFEST syllabi for several editions of the festival reveals the principal features of its danceturgy to be thematic relevance, state identity, cultural integration, dance theatre form, limited cast, and short timeframe.

Nasarawa state has been successful in keying into the NAFEST philosophy, as evident in its creative outputs and achievements at NAFEST. A compositional analysis of *Bla Mbo* shows that the piece was specifically designed to suit the NAFEST ideology and festival theme for 2009. *Bla Mbo* was created through a highly intellectual process of robust intercultural conversations and collaborations. The choreographic approach adopted by the NSPT represented a skilful navigation of the complexities of cultural diversity in Nasarawa State, de-emphasising mono-ethnic identities and projecting state identity.

Sadly, understanding the NAFEST ideology and interpreting it in choreographic terms is still a general problem with most participating states at the festival. Also, the NSPT status at NAFEST has suffered a decline due to a lack of funding at the state level. Nevertheless, their legacy in the history of NAFEST is undeniable. Some states like Ekiti have keyed into the NSPT approach and continue to be outstanding at NAFEST and other national and international festivals. The experiment carried out by NSPT several years ago is an indication that more effort should be made to elaborate choreographic theories to advance the ideology of NAFEST. This study therefore recommends workshops to concentrate on the adoption and modification of the NSPT choreographic approach for NAFEST danceturgy.

Acknowledgements

This researcher was a member of the choreographic team that produced *Bla Mbo* in 2009. The paper borrows extensively from this experience.

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Notes

1. Nigeria has over three hundred ethnic groups and well above six hundred distinct languages and dialects. (Tume 2019, 2).